

# THE STRAIN OF HARMONY

Men and Women in the  
History of China

*By the same Author*

STRANGE VIGOUR A biography of Sun Yat sen

OVER MY SHOULDER A book of Travel

WILLIAM THE SILENT A biography for Boys and Girls

THE PAGODA PLOT An adventure story for Boys

RED TREASURE A novel for the Young





*Photo: Hedda Morrison*

## MORNING BY THE GREAT WALL

# THE STRAIN OF HARMONY

Men and Women in the  
History of China

*by*

BERNARD MARTIN

*When brothers live in concord and at peace  
The strain of harmony shall never cease.*  
THE BOOK OF SONGS



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For  
MY MOTHER  
on her 80th birthday  
and for her grandchildren:  
JOHN POWELL MARTIN  
JOAN PATRICIA RAVEN  
DOREEN RUTH RAVEN  
ROSEMARY MARGARET TRIPP  
MICHAEL ARTHUR MARTIN TRIPP





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## FOREWORD

By S. I. HSIUNG

Author of *Lady Precious Stream*

IN the Chinese language, the word "peace" is composed of two parts a "woman" under a "roof". Perfectly logical and true. And "two women" under the same "roof" composes the word "quarrel", I have often been told. Again perfectly logical but unfortunately there isn't such a Chinese word. Stories about my country circulated in the Western World are mostly like this. How perfectly charming, one would exclaim on hearing them, but how disappointing when they proved to be untrue. Numerous books have been written by popular journalists who have paid a hurried visit to that remote country. I refrain from commenting on them.

To write a good book is not easy; to write a good and honest one is doubly difficult. Mr. Bernard Martin's *Strange Vigour* is the best and most honest biography of Sun Yat-sen in any language, including the Chinese. I have never ceased to recommend it to my friends. Since I have the honour to be asked to write a Foreword for Mr. Bernard Martin's present work, which I enjoyed reading, I am delighted to recommend it most highly to the public.

Iffley Turn House, Oxford.

November, 1947.





## AUTHOR'S PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"SUCH as are addicted to the laudable habit of skipping" (to quote Sir Walter Scott, from *Redgauntlet*) can indulge their habit freely in a book of this sort for it consists of simple biographical sketches—each complete in itself. But although the subjects are varied—sages, scoundrels, poets, warriors, emperors and so forth—and although the first lived more than four thousand years ago and the last has but recently celebrated his sixtieth birthday, there is an underlying unity in the book. This may be observed by those readers who follow the counsel of perfection given once by a King to a distinguished White Rabbit, "begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end; then stop".

My indebtedness to many writers is obvious and where so much is due it may seem invidious to mention names. Nevertheless I owe peculiar thanks to Mr. S. I. Hsiung, who not only read my book in typescript and gave me valuable advice, but also allowed me to read his biography, *Chiang Kai-shek*, before its publication. The significant letters quoted in my short sketch of Chiang are of his translation. My thanks are due also to Messrs. Heinemann's readers for helpful suggestions. Mr. Arthur Waley gave me permission to quote his translation of the short poem by Po Chü-i from *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (Constable) and extracts from his *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* (Allen and Unwin) and *The Way and the Power* (Allen and Unwin). The short poems by the Empress Tang are from translations by Miss Genevieve Wimsatt (Columbia University Press). The poems by Tu Fu are from *Tu Fu* and *Travels of a Chinese Poet* by Florence Ayscough (Jonathan Cape). The poem on page 48 is from *The Jade Mountain* by Witter Bynner (Alfred A. Knopf Inc.). Miss Nora Waln gave me permission to quote her impression of Sun Yat-sen, page 170, from *The House of Exile*. My thanks are due also to the following publishers: Allen and Unwin for extracts from *A Manchu Monarch* by A. E. Grantham; D. Appleton-Century Co. for extracts from *Pan Chao* by Dr. Nancy Lee Swann; Cambridge University Press for extracts from *The Travels of Fa-Hsien* by Herbert A. Giles, and from *Son of Heaven* by C. P. Fitzgerald; Heinemann for quotations from

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Some of the sayings of Confucius are from *The Wisdom of Confucius* edited and translated by Lin Yutang (Modern Library, New York, 1938).

# YAO

## THE SAGE EMPEROR

(About 2350 B.C.)

THERE was a man of China named Yao: and, because he was wise and could understand the markings on the shell of the Great Tortoise, the people chose him to be their emperor and called him the Son of Heaven.

A time came when the responsibility of ruling lay heavy upon Yao, so he went to a good man who was a hermit and asked him to share the throne. "What!" cried the hermit, "share your power? Don't pollute me with such a suggestion", and he hurried to a near-by stream to wash his ears. While he was doing so another man came to the stream to water a cow. "Why do you wash your ears so vigorously?" enquired the newcomer. "The emperor has just asked me to share his throne," explained the hermit; whereupon the man with the cow dragged away his beast, lest drinking the polluted stream should make it sick.

This happened about the year 2350 B.C. in what is now North China. During the dry winter months the ground froze hard, and men had to wait for the light spring rains before they could cultivate. But during the hot summer heavy rains often damaged the crops and, in unlucky years, caused floods. These primitive farming folk were so dependent on the seasons for their food, that the very word they used for weather means, literally, "Heaven's Mood".

The Great Tortoise, who had lived longer than any man knew, carried marks on his back showing when there had been floods and droughts in ages long gone by; and the wise Yao, by studying these marks and by observing "the stars of the evening sky", was able to make a simple calendar, which forewarned his people, teaching them when to sow and when to reap. He was clever, too, in the art of divination. He would take the bone of an ox and burn one side of it until the other side cracked. Then he would study these cracks, and from their shapes predict the future.

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The early Chinese regarded their emperor as a priest as well as a ruler. He was the Son of Heaven, and if he ruled so as to please Heaven the weather would be good and the seasons normal. That Yao shared this view of his priestly duties we know from a song, in which he advised his people:

*With trembling heart and cautious steps  
Walk daily in fear of God.  
Though you never trip over a mountain  
You may often trip over a clod!*

At the beginning of his reign Yao was successful. It is said in *The Book of History*, "Peace reigned throughout the land, for the Son of Heaven governed the people with virtue and had regard for Heaven's decrees." But a time came when the country suffered a series of calamities. The spring rains were late and the young corn wilted in the sun-baked earth. Wild beasts, in their search for water, broke out from the forests, trampled the fields and molested the people.

Yao went from village to village, "in a red chariot drawn by white horses", and shared the concern of his subjects. With solemn rites he implored Heaven to change her mood, but the sky remained blue day after day until the parched crops died. Then Yao took a black bull, and cutting off some of his own hair tied it to the bull's head and slew the beast as a sacrifice to Heaven. The rains came; but they came in such a deluge that the rivers burst their banks, swept away houses, swamped boats and carried off the top soil of the fields leaving the people in a worse plight than before.

Clearly Heaven was angry with the Son of Heaven, and it was then that Yao sought the aid of a hermit, as one who lived close to God.

When the hermit refused to share the throne, Yao called the headmen of all the villages to his palace. He was a simple man who ruled without ostentation. His palace had four gates, but was otherwise little more than a large wooden-framed house with mud walls and a thatched roof. It is recorded: "the eaves of his thatch were not trimmed and the rafters were unplanned, while the beams . . . had no ornamental ends. The

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walls were not painted, nor were his mattings fringed with borders."

The palace faced south, and on the east side was a temple for the Ancestors and on the west a temple for the Gods of the Soil and Crops. Like other ancient peoples the Chinese of Yao's time made sacrifices to their ancestors; believing this would, in some mysterious way, ensure the continuance of the race. In like manner they sacrificed to the many Spirits which they believed dwelt in Nature, in the soil, in water, in trees and in the mountains; for on the goodwill of such Spirits depended man's success in the endless struggle with the elements.

When the headmen were assembled, Yao told them he wanted someone to share his throne, and to succeed him as Son of Heaven when he was too old to perform the sacrifices.

"Why not appoint your own son?" asked one.

"Alas!" replied the emperor, "I find no virtue in him. He would make a bad ruler for he does not always speak the truth."

"There is a young man in my village who might do," suggested an elder. "His father is blind with the blindness of unreason, and his mother is frail with the frailty of self-deception; and he has a young brother who is haughty and very disagreeable. Yet this young man, who is named Shun, overcomes all difficulties by his goodness. He is so popular with the neighbours that when he ploughs they move their landmarks to give him a little more land, and when he fishes they take in their lines to give him a better chance to catch a fish!"

"I will try him," said Yao; and he sent Shun gifts of oxen and sheep and grain and made him a prince.

Shun's unpleasant relations were jealous of these royal favours and tried to kill him. When he was working in the loft of a high building, his blind father took away the ladder and set fire to the place; but Shun jumped to the ground, using a wide-brimmed hat as a parachute, and by a miracle was uninjured. When he was digging a deep well, his frail mother and his disagreeable brother shovelled the earth back upon him and went away supposing him to be buried alive; but Shun had prepared an alcove so that he was able to dig himself out again. The virtuous Shun, in spite of these attempts on his life, continued to honour his parents as long as they lived, and years later,

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when it was in his power to do so, he made his brother a prince.

Yao set Shun many difficult and dangerous tasks and always Shun did them well. He was ordered to make calculations of the seasons, and his calculations proved to be correct. He was placed in charge of the four gates of the palace, and those who came with petitions or complaints were so ingratiated by his manners that they "came in harmoniously and went forth contented and pleased". He was sent to make a survey of the country "while the floods were still unabated", and "though fierce winds, thunder and torrential rains prevailed, he was not dismayed, neither did he lose his way".

In all these tasks Shun showed himself to be an able man, fit to administer a kingdom; but Yao wanted to be sure that he was worthy, also, to perform the priestly duties of the Son of Heaven. Wherefore Yao called his two daughters and said to them, "I am going to marry you to Shun. Watch his conduct carefully and let me know if he is in all things upright and really deserves his good reputation." Thus the emperor's daughters became Shun's wives, and they were so happy that when he died, many years later, they were overwhelmed with grief. To this very day there grows, in the province of Hunan, a species of bamboo much valued by makers of flutes, and the country folk say that the purple rings round the stems of this bamboo are the tears shed by Yao's daughters when Shun died.

At last the emperor was satisfied with Shun's conduct and said to him, "I have studied your actions and taken count of your words. Your actions are great and your words are few. Do you therefore ascend the throne."

For thirty years Yao and Shun ruled together. They set up a Complaint Board so that whoever had a grievance against the government might state it without fear. They appointed magistrates and told them "offences of ignorance and misfortune must be freely pardoned, and in all matters of doubt let your judgment incline to the side of mercy". They organised public works, building up the banks of the rivers and draining the land, so that floods were brought under control. Forests were burned down to increase the area for crops, wild animals were driven from the neighbourhood of villages and the people taught to cultivate five different kinds of grain.

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Yao and Shun worked so hard for the good of their people that it is said, "there was no hair on their shanks, no down on their thighs", and they "wore out their guts by ceaseless acts of goodness and duty".

Yao lived in a simple manner. He had no crown jewels. His state coach was "not emblazoned", in summer he wore a yellow cap and a dark cotton tunic and in winter a deerskin. He was not fastidious about his food and ate "broth of lentils from a clay dish using a wooden spoon".

When Yao died, Shun continued to reign for many years and the Chinese look back to this early period of their history as the golden age. It became a stock phrase in literature to say of a good man that "even Yao and Shun could not have found cause to criticise him"; and when public affairs went amiss, men said it was because the virtue of these rulers was not being imitated:

*. . . Yao and Shun  
All men forget.  
Alas! our day is done,  
Our sun has set!*

In *The Book of History*, written more than fifteen hundred years after the reign of Yao, his frugal manner of life is praised, "yet was he the richest, the wisest, the longest-lived and most beloved of all that ever ruled over China".

We know that not long after Shun's reign it was usual for the Emperors of China to appoint four chief Ministers of State, one of these being the *Tai Shih*, or official historian. His duties may have been to recall the past in ballads, but it is very likely he made some written account of events. If so, the earliest records have perished, for the first written history known to us begins with the year 841 B.C.

The story of the Emperor Yao is pre-history rather than history, though all through the centuries right up to our own day Chinese scholars have accepted him as a real person. Did Yao really ask a hermit to share his throne? And did the hermit feel insulted? Perhaps not, but the story illustrates an important truth in Chinese life. From the earliest times



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the Chinese have respected character: an emperor is an emperor, a hermit is a hermit, they have different duties and their power to do good or evil varies—but each is a man, and must be respected first for his manhood.

# LAO TZU

## THE MYSTIC

(About 600-500 B.C.)

ACCORDING to a widely accepted legend, a philosopher, named Lao Tzu ("venerable gentleman"), was court librarian at the capital city, Loyang, when the great teacher Confucius was a young man. Lao Tzu grew tired of his job and rode away to the west on "a green cow". When he came to the frontier, the officer on guard questioned him about his beliefs. Lao Tzu, thereupon, wrote the *Tao Tê Ching*, a book of rather more than five thousand words, some in rhyme, arranged in eighty-one very short chapters. This book has had a greater influence on mankind than almost any other book ever written.

Very little is known about Lao Tzu, and none of the stories of him can be taken as literal fact. It is said he was given a nickname on account of the peculiar shape of his ears and, even, that he was born wearing a beard.

His reputation for wisdom and holiness was such that men of learning were anxious to meet him. One scholar came a long way for this purpose, pressing onwards "through the hundred stages of the journey till my heels were blistered". When, at last, he reached Lao Tzu's home, he saw the sage take some remains of a salad that had been thrown on to a rubbish heap and give them to his sister to eat. The scholar rebuked the sage for this too frugal deed saying, "This was ill-bred". Lao Tzu ignored the rebuke, so next day the scholar returned and, having apologised for his impertinence, asked how it was Lao Tzu had taken his remark so calmly. "If you had called me an ox, I should have accepted the name of ox; if you had called me a horse I should have accepted the name of horse," answered Lao Tzu. "If I submitted, it was not because I submitted to you, but because my every act is to submit."

How far Lao Tzu carried this idea of giving way to other people may be judged from the story of another scholar who went to see him. Scholars were treated with great respect

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throughout China. This one was so self-important that when he reached the inn everyone bustled about to show him proper regard. The innkeeper brought him a mat, the innkeeper's wife hurried forward with a towel and comb, the other guests bowed respectfully and made way for him, while the servants stood aside from the stove to give him greater warmth. But after this pampered scholar had spent some time with Lao Tzu, learning the emptiness of self-importance, the error of self-seeking and the merit of complete submission, he became so humble that, before he finally left the inn, "people were already pushing him off his own mat!"

A saying attributed to Lao Tzu shows the kind of paradox he used in his teaching, "I have three precious things, which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle, and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others, and you can become a leader among men."

It is said that Confucius had several interviews with Lao Tzu. Confucius, full of his schemes for improving men by ritual and by following the ways of the sage emperors Yao and Shun, expounded eagerly his theories. He told Lao Tzu he had edited six ancient scriptures and "thoroughly mastered their import", but complained that none of the rulers of his own day would listen to his teaching. "That's a lucky thing," replied Lao Tzu; "those six scriptures are merely the dim footprints of the ancient kings. They tell us nothing of the force that guided their steps. All your lectures are concerned with things that are no better than footprints in the dust. Footprints are made by shoes; but they are far from being shoes."

This criticism shook the confident young Confucius and, though he was not convinced, he was very impressed. To his students he said, "I know that birds fly, that fish swim, and that beasts run. The runner I can trap, the swimmer I can hook, the flyer I can shoot with bow and arrow. But of dragons I have no knowledge—dragons that soar into the sky mounting on the wind and clouds. Such an one is Lao Tzu. He is as mighty as a dragon." At another interview Lao Tzu snubbed Confucius. "Get rid of your enthusiasm," he said, "give up

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your desire to reform everyone, and your formal manners. They are all worthless. That is my advice to you." After this rebuke Confucius "for three days did not utter a word", and when he did speak he told his friends, "at his voice my mouth gaped wide, my tongue protruded and my soul was plunged in trouble".

The different outlook of these two philosophers may be gauged from their attitude to a very old Chinese proverb, *Requite injuries with good deeds*. Lao Tzu said this proverb expressed his ideas exactly. Confucius argued that to repay injuries with good deeds leaves nothing more with which to repay good deeds. He said, "Repay good deeds with good deeds, but repay injuries with justice and, if necessary, with punishment."

After Lao Tzu rode away on his green cow nothing more was heard of him, but his followers established the religion which came to be known as Tao, or "the way". We read of one emperor who was in the habit of holding forth on the doctrines of Lao Tzu before his assembled ministers, "and would forthwith degrade anyone who stretched, yawned or spat during his discourse". It is recorded of another emperor that he asked a follower of Lao Tzu if Tao was any use for the practical purposes of government, and received the emphatic, if rather tactless, reply, "Why! with Tao even a corpse could run the empire."

In time, Taoism became a strong rival to Confucianism. Like other religions Taoism split into sects, some of which became very corrupt. In China to-day there are so-called Taoist priests who make money by practising "magic". For a fee they will supply charms against evil spirits, teach spells to ruin an enemy, or find the "lucky day" for a marriage, a funeral or any other important event. Such superstitious Taoism has nothing to do with Lao Tzu or with the noble teaching of the *Tao Tê Ching*.

Modern scholars consider that this short book, which has been the subject of many long commentaries, was compiled at the time of the "hundred schools" of philosophy, several hundred years after Confucius. They doubt the various stories about Lao Tzu and hold that there is no evidence that such a man existed. The fact remains that Chinese scholars, throughout the

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ages, believed that Lao Tzu wrote the *Tao Tê Ching*; or at least, that the book is made up from his sayings.

The *Tao Tê Ching* is full of common sense, often expressed in paradox. Some of it is easy to understand, yet so pregnant with meaning that one never seems to reach final understanding; as, for instance, "Heaven arms with pity those whom it would not see destroyed," or, "When armies are raised and issues joined it is he who does not delight in war that wins." Of the positive, simple admonitions in *Tao Tê Ching* perhaps the most important is, "To the good I would be good; to the not-good I would also be good, in order to make them good," and, "Even if a man is bad, how can it be right to cast him off?"

One of the sayings in this book, "Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know," inspired a witty verse from the ninth-century poet, Po Chü-i:

*Those who speak know nothing;  
Those who know are silent.  
These words, as I am told,  
Were spoken by Lao Tzu.  
If we are to believe that Lao Tzu  
was himself one who knew,  
How comes it that he wrote a book  
of five thousand words?*

We have no reliable evidence that there was such a person as Lao Tzu, but behind the *Tao Tê Ching* and the philosophy of Tao there must have been some great thinker. The light of day remains even when the sun is hidden by mist; and, though we may reject all the known stories of Lao Tzu and be uncertain of his time and place, we cannot doubt the profound influence he has exercised over the largest group of civilised mankind.

# CONFUCIUS

## THE TEACHER

(551-479 B.C.)

As the feudal lords of ancient China grew powerful their allegiance to the Son of Heaven came to mean little. Petty quarrels resulted in civil wars, engaging soldiers who would have been better occupied in the defence of the empire. The country split into a number of states, with rulers who called themselves kings and did much as they pleased.

During one of these petty wars soldiers, attacking a walled town, saw at daybreak that the defenders had forgotten, apparently, to close one of the gates which had been opened during the night. Seizing this unexpected advantage, a small party rushed the gate and entered the town, only to find themselves in an ambush. The portcullis of the gate began to descend, trapping them inside the town. Cut off from reinforcements and heavily outnumbered by the enemy, the over-bold attackers faced certain death.

At this critical moment an old soldier, named Kung, grasped the heavy portcullis with both hands, and, by a supreme effort, held it up long enough for his comrades to make good their retreat. Such a feat of strength made Kung the hero of songs sung in the wine shops and market places.

In primitive times the uncertainty of life made men concerned lest their families should die out. Side by side with this instinct, there grew up a belief that the dead live on in an unseen world, and that these spirits of the ancestors continue to take an active interest in the affairs of the family. It seemed only right, therefore, that a family should hold in remembrance their ancestors in the spirit world; and amongst the Chinese this was done by simple ceremonies, without which the spirits would suffer. So every Chinese desired at least one son to carry on the family name, and to conduct what we call "ancestor worship"; though, to be sure, the word "worship" is rather misleading.

Kung, the hero of the portcullis, was growing old when a son

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was born to him during the eighth moon of the year 551 B.C. This child was well known in his generation; and after his death his teaching spread so widely that he became the most famous of all the sons of men. There is a Chinese word *fu* which means "man" and another *tze* which means "Great Teacher" or "Master".

In due time the Kung boy was known to his countrymen as Kung Fu-tze. Two thousand years later, when men of the western nations began to learn something of Chinese civilisation, they found the name Kung Fu-tze difficult and turned it into "Confucius".

Old Kung died when his son was still an infant and the boy was brought up by his mother. Unlike most women of that time she did not believe in ghosts, ghouls or goblins. The early Chinese had very lively imaginations. Their world was a world of good and evil spirits, of fabulous monsters, dragons, demon-snakes, magic-parrots, cocks that fed on jade, immortal tortoises, innumerable weird birds and, especially, foxes which changed into women:

*The big tail it trails behind becomes a long red petticoat.  
Slowly she strides along the paths between the rustic hamlets,  
And where at sunset no human sounds are heard  
She sings, she dances, and alternately laments and wails,  
Without raising her eyebrows, velvety as the kingfisher, but bowing her  
pretty face,  
She bursts into a fit of laughter, a thousand, a myriad of joys.*

The mother of Confucius took no interest in this make-believe world, so vivid to her neighbours, but she allowed her son to join with other children in mock-ceremony games of weddings, funerals and sacrificial offerings. He learnt archery, which in China was a skilled sport with elaborate ceremony. He went fishing, but considered it unsporting to use a net; likewise he would not shoot an arrow at a bird unless it was on the wing.

Confucius went to school and was a keen pupil. It was a distinction to be a scholar and the man who could claim that title was respected by everyone. It may be that young Confucius grew a little conceited, for there is a story that he had to be snubbed. A certain baron gave a banquet to the scholars of the district.

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Confucius felt he was entitled to attend, but when he arrived an official said, "The baron is giving a banquet to the scholars and is not contemplating the pleasure of inviting you!"

Confucius lived in a state called Lu, and when he was seventeen he was appointed Collector of Grain Tithes for the Duke of Lu. It was not the sort of work a young scholar would choose. He had to see that the correct quantities of grain were handed over by the peasant-farmers—an unpleasant job, because the duke had long since forgotten the frugal example of the Emperor Yao and demanded excessive quantities.

Confucius was noted for the fairness of his measures. He said, "My calculation must be correct, that is all I have to care about." Before long he was promoted to the even more troublesome task of looking after a similar tithe in cattle and sheep. He had to check the number of beasts sent in by the farmers and see they were in good condition. The record says, "and the cattle and sheep quickly multiplied", which means, probably, that the previous collector was unscrupulous but that Confucius did the work honestly. He said, "All I have to care about is that the oxen must be fat and strong and of superior quality." Perhaps he wanted his friends to understand from this remark that he was not responsible for such exorbitant taxation; he was only doing his duty as a junior official.

This tax-gathering taught Confucius valuable lessons about human nature. He met people who tried to cheat him; people who really could not pay their tithes; people who grumbled against the ruler and people who bore poverty bravely. Some of the officials with whom he worked accepted bribes and swindled their employer. When, years later, Confucius was asked what he thought of the official class, he may have had in mind some well-fed, comfort-loving colleague as he answered, "Oh! those rice-bags! They don't count at all."

Confucius saw the evils of a system of government which overtaxed the peasants and did nothing to help them. He had sympathy for the poor but he noticed how thriftless and lax they had become, in imitation of the luxury and licence of the rich. As a scholar, forced by circumstances to this uncongenial work, Confucius could not help contrasting the history-book versions of the Golden Age of Yao and Shun with this wretched



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world of his own day, with its bickering kings, corrupt officials and untutored masses.

Before long he gave up his appointment, determined to do what he could to bring about the social reforms which seemed necessary. He wandered from place to place teaching, studying and talking. Reformers are not popular with governments and the ardent young man made himself disliked, for we read that he went into a neighbouring state but was "unceremoniously sent away"; he was "driven out" of two other states; and "landed in difficulties and bodily danger" elsewhere. Someone asked him, "Why are you so self-important and constantly rushing about? Don't you talk a bit too much?" "It isn't that I want to talk," protested Confucius, "it's because I hate the present moral chaos and want to put it right."

The more Confucius studied, the more he wanted to understand the Golden Age and the ideals which made life then so attractive. There was a library in Lu, but by far the best collection of books was at Loyang, the capital of the empire, where the Son of Heaven had his ineffective court. So Confucius returned from his wanderings to his native Lu and asked the duke to allow him to visit Loyang. The duke not only agreed but lent Confucius and his friends "a carriage with two horses and a page". This carriage was a springless two-wheeled cart and the journey to Loyang took, probably, a week or more.

It was a great experience. The buildings of Loyang were more impressive than any Confucius had seen. One, known as "the Hall of Light", was set apart for ceremonies on the rare occasions when feudal rulers came to pay their respects to the Son of Heaven. Confucius noted with satisfaction that places of honour in this hall were reserved for pictures of the ancient emperors, including Yao and Shun. He studied old books, examined the bronze vessels used in the old ceremonies and took special delight in learning all he could about music, for music was an important part of many ceremonies and court officials were expected to know the correct music for every occasion.

The visit to Loyang made Confucius more than ever enthusiastic about the Golden Age and discontented with his own. He now saw clearly that a ruler should be an example to his subjects and that the people should be trained to habits which

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would make everyday life noble. The old glories of the Son of Heaven must be revived, the rulers of the states must remember their loyalty to the emperor and their obligations to the people, and everyone must observe strictly the ritual of ancestor worship.

Confucius soon had a number of disciples. He tried to persuade the Duke of Lu to govern "by good example". If that were done, he argued, Lu would become such a wonderful state that men from all parts of China would want to settle there. On one of his journeys Confucius heard a woman wailing by the roadside and sent a disciple to learn what was wrong. "My husband and my mother's brother were killed here by a tiger," the woman said, "and now my son has met the same fate." "Why do you not move from such a dangerous neighbourhood?" asked the disciple. "Because the officials here are not oppressive," explained the woman. When Confucius was told, he said to his disciples, "You hear that, my children! An oppressive official is more to be feared than a dangerous tiger!"

It was customary at that time for teachers to have no salary but for pupils to bring them gifts, usually of food. Confucius never refused to teach anyone. "From the very poorest upwards," he said, "beginning even with the man who could bring no better present than a bundle of dried flesh, none has ever come to me without receiving instruction." The phrase "a bundle of dried flesh" is still used in China to mean tuition or teacher's fees.

Confucius could enjoy a joke with his pupils, but he never spared himself and had no use for lax or indifferent disciples. "At fifteen I set my heart upon learning," he said, "at thirty I had planted my feet firm upon the ground, at forty I no longer suffered from perplexities." Once he caught a lazy disciple basking in the sun when he should have been working, and remarked, "Rotten wood cannot be carved, a wall of dirty mud will not take plaster. What is the use of my trying to teach this fellow!"

To his pupils he said, "Learn as if you were following someone whom you could not catch up, as though it were someone you were frightened of losing." Again he said, "To have faults and to be making no effort to amend them is to have faults indeed!"

Confucius, though he spent so much time teaching, never neglected his own studies. He learnt to sing all the three hundred

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and five songs of an old collection and learned, also, to play the music for them on a string instrument. Once he became so engrossed by the study of dance music, said to have been composed by the Emperor Shun, that "for three months he forgot the taste of meat". In his old age he began to study *The Book of Changes*. It was written on strips of bamboo held together with leather straps. He read the book so thoroughly that the straps were worn out and had to be replaced three times. Then he said, "Give me a few more years to study this book and I shall be pretty good at understanding its philosophy."

His reputation for keenness was such that a gatekeeper described him as "the fellow who knows that a thing can't be done and still wants to do it!" Of himself Confucius said, "In every hamlet of ten families, there are always some people as honest and faithful as myself, but none who is so devoted to study." On another occasion he said, "I have gone the whole day without food and a whole night without sleep, occupied in thinking and unable to arrive at any conclusion. So I decided to study again."

A foolish quarrel in the state of Lu ended what hopes Confucius may have had of getting the duke to try his reforms. The quarrel arose over a cockfight. According to a Chinese history book, the cocks of two influential families "were in the habit of fighting"; which means, we may suppose, that their masters were in the habit of squabbling and satisfied their rivalry with periodic cock-fights! The trouble began when the head of one family, who had the delightful name of Baron Ping, put mustard in the neck feathers of his bird hoping to partially blind the rival bird when it attacked. Report of this trick reached Baron Ping's opponent, who counteracted by sheathing the spurs of his bird with sharp metal. What happened to the unfortunate cocks is not known, for the discovery of these tricks so enraged the spectators that a brawl began which led, finally, to the exile of the Duke of Lu. Confucius, in loyalty to his ruler, followed the duke and it was more than twenty years before he returned home.

During all these years Confucius went on with his studies, taught his disciples, and tried to influence the rulers of the various states to restore the virtues of the Golden Age.

It is said that when at last Confucius returned to Lu he became

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Chief Minister and was so successful that "after three months the mutton and pork butchers did not adulterate their meat . . . and things lost on the streets were not stolen but left for the owner to recover". This story may have been invented by someone who wanted a happy ending to the series of disappointments which Confucius suffered. Like other great teachers, Confucius had to see his words go unheeded by his own generation, save for a handful of disciples. One of his friends once remarked, "Here is a piece of precious jade, preserved in a casket and waiting for a good price for sale," and Confucius, thinking of the precious truth he offered, laughed rather bitterly and then cried, "For sale! For sale! I am the one waiting for a good price to be sold!"

According to another story Confucius was badly disappointed by the Duke of Lu, when a neighbouring ruler sent the duke a gift of eighty dancing girls and a hundred and twenty superb horses. The duke was so captivated by the dancers, so thrilled with the horses, that he forgot his duties and "hung about the place for whole days". Observing this, one of Confucius' disciples said sadly, "I think it's time for us to go." Confucius, anxious to give the duke every chance, replied, "Wait. It is near the time for the sacrifice to Heaven; if the duke remembers to send the burnt offerings I will yet choose to stay." Alas! The infatuated duke forgot even this important duty, so Confucius left.

He settled in another state, but after ten months the ruler wanted to get rid of him and sent a soldier in full uniform "to pass in and out of the room occupied by the Master". Confucius took this hint and moved to another state. On the way he was mistaken for a local tyrant. An angry mob surrounded him and for five days, till his identity was established, he was in danger of public execution. Then his favourite disciple turned up. "I thought you were killed," said Confucius by way of greeting. The disciple replied laughingly, "How dare I be killed, so long as you live!"

Confucius left no written record of his teaching, though he collected and edited ancient poems, songs and histories which are now known as the Confucian Classics. It is evident he was careful always to adapt his advice to those to whom it was offered. One of his friends said, "The master is very good at gently leading a man along."

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Once he said to four of his disciples, "Don't think I'm putting on airs because I'm older than you, but tell me, how would you like to appear to other men if you had the chance?" One said he would like "to rule over a country with one thousand carriages, situated between two powerful neighbours, involved in war and suffering from famine". He would so govern the country that in three years it would become "strong and orderly". Confucius smiled at this grandiloquent dream. The second disciple said he would like to rule only a small country and in three years "the people will have enough to eat" but he could not undertake to teach the people to be good. The third said he would like to "wear the ceremonial cap and gown of a minor official" and assist at religious worship and political conferences. "Not that I say I could do it properly," he added modestly, "but I am willing to learn." "And what about you?" asked Confucius, turning to the fourth disciple, who was playing softly on a musical instrument. With a final "twang" the disciple put down the instrument, got up and replied, "You know my ambition is different from theirs." "That doesn't matter," said Confucius, "we are just trying to find out what each would like to do." "Well," said the fourth disciple, "I should like to go with a few grown-ups and six or seven children to bathe in the River Ch'i, and afterwards enjoy the breeze in the woods, and then sing on our way home." Confucius heaved a deep sigh and said, "You are the man after my own heart."

From this record we can understand why Confucius was so loved by his friends. Living in rather rough times he was sensitive to other people's feelings. If he found himself at a meal sitting next to someone in mourning "he would not eat his fill", and after he had been to a funeral he would not sing for the rest of the day, though singing was a constant joy to him.

When he passed anyone in mourning, or blind people, "he would change his countenance even though they were children". But he could be severe in his judgments and, sometimes, quite rude. He said of one ruler, "If this man can be endured, who cannot be endured?" Once, when a man he disliked wanted to see him he sent a message saying he was sick and then, while the man was still at the door, took a stringed instrument and began to sing, just to let the man know that he was not really ill!

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It is difficult for a teacher, surrounded by admiring disciples, to be humble. Confucius once said, "You think I know a great deal? I don't. There was an uneducated man who asked me about something and I couldn't explain it to him . . . I was at my wits' end." On another occasion he said, "The true man has no worries; the wise man has no perplexities; and the brave man has no fear. These are three things I have been unable to attain."

A duke asked one of the disciples what sort of a man Confucius was and the disciple did not know how to reply. When Confucius heard he said, "Why didn't you tell him that I am a man who pursues the truth untiringly, and teaches people unceasingly, and who forgets to eat when he is enthusiastic about something, and forgets all his worries when happy and elated and who can never remember that he is growing old?"

Once, separated from his companions, Confucius stood alone outside the gate of a city. Someone said, "There is a man at the East Gate . . . he looks crestfallen like a homeless wandering dog." Later, when Confucius was told, he smiled and said, "A homeless, wandering dog—he is quite right, he is quite right!"

The last days of Confucius were sad. Two of his favourite disciples died; he realised the complete failure of his attempts to influence the rulers of the various states of China; and he saw conditions in the empire going from bad to worse. The old man fell ill, but when a friend came to see him he was able to hobble to the door, supported by a walking stick. "Why do you turn up so late?" he asked rather querulously and then, after singing a sad song and weeping a little, said, "For a long time the world has been living in moral chaos and no ruler has been able to follow me." He died a few days later, aged seventy-two.

It was not long before the Chinese realised the greatness of Confucius, and though the ideals he set before his countrymen were difficult, their worth was widely acknowledged. Scholars studied the old records he so much praised, wise men pondered his sayings, his portrait was hung in every schoolroom and all children were taught some of his precepts. His influence became so widespread that, years later, one of the most famous of the Sons of Heaven said, "Confucius is to the Chinese what water is to the fishes." And yet it is not so much the opinions of Confucius which have moulded Chinese civilisation as his methods

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of teaching. "Only one who bursts with eagerness do I instruct; only one who bubbles with excitement do I enlighten. If I hold up one corner and a man cannot come back to me with the other three, I do not continue the lesson."

Confucius has been called many things—a conservative, a reformer, a reactionary; such labels suit lesser men but can never be applied to the greatest. He was conservative in that he wished to conserve old customs and often harked back to "the good old days"; he was a reformer in that he spent his life trying to alter the existing system of government and to change men's hearts from evil to good; and he was reactionary in that he sometimes disregarded the common man.

It may be said that Confucius aimed at three things; to show rulers how to govern by their own good example, to teach the people ceremonies and rituals which would make for an orderly community life, and to preach to the individual moral goodness.

He laid great stress on the need for harmony between ruler and ruled, between the members of a family and between friends. Especially he emphasised filial duty—which was rather more than the duty of a son towards his parents. Confucius approved the verse in *The Book of Songs*:

*When wives and children and their sires are one,  
'Tis like the harp and lute in unison.  
When brothers live in concord and at peace  
The strain of harmony shall never cease.  
The lamp of happy union lights the home,  
And bright days follow when the children come.*

From his mother he learnt to ignore the popular superstitions, and to his disciples "he did not talk about monsters" and all sorts of "heavenly spirits". When asked about such spirits he replied, "We do not yet know how to serve men, how can we know about serving the spirits?"

His first concern was to make the world a better place to live in, but he was deeply religious and cared greatly for religious ceremonies. To Confucius religion meant everything connected with life—the social order, education, state functions, marriages, funerals, day-to-day conduct in the home, music, dancing, eating,

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drinking, archery and other sports, friendship, courtesy and good manners. Because he believed human life should be holy he was concerned with every aspect of it. Once, when he was seriously ill, a disciple suggested he should go to a temple and pray. Notwithstanding his enthusiasm for ritual and ceremonial worship, Confucius replied that although he had not been to a temple he had been praying for a long time: true prayer means putting oneself in harmony with God's laws.

Once when Confucius was asked to sum up his teaching in a single phrase, he quoted *The Book of Songs*, "Let there be no evil in your thoughts"; and when a disciple said, "Is there any single saying that a man can act upon all day and every day?" Confucius, who, it must be remembered, lived five hundred years before Christ, replied, "Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you."





## CH'IN SHIH HUANG TI

THE "FIRST" EMPEROR

(259-210 B.C.)

ABOUT the year 250 B.C., a merchant named Lü became very rich by "buying things up when they were cheap and selling them when they became dear". He met an exiled prince from one of the small independent kingdoms into which China was at that time split. "Here, indeed, is a wonderful piece of goods to buy cheap and put in stock till the price goes up," he said to himself; and straightway Lü bought the exiled prince, in exchange for his own wife, to whom the prince had taken a sudden fancy.

It was not difficult for such a man as Lü to get the prince recalled from exile and then to bribe courtiers to have him declared Heir-Apparent. Lü was lucky, too, for the ruler soon died and the prince became a king. Lü grew powerful at court and when, three years later, the king died and was succeeded by his son, a boy of thirteen, Lü was made Chief Minister and given the honourable title of "Second Father". His original investment in an exiled prince was paying handsome dividends.

The part of China over which the young king ruled was one seventh of the whole country; known as the State of Ch'in.

Since the time of Confucius the scholars of China had speculated in thought as actively as the merchant Lü speculated in commodities, and so many theories arose that men spoke of "the hundred schools of philosophy". Some scholars kept very closely to the teaching of Confucius, some were mystics, some socialists, some pacifists, and there was one important group known as the School of Law, or "The Realists".

The Realists, seeing that the old feudal system was breaking down and that China was split into small rival kingdoms, believed the ruler should make himself all-powerful. He must become a dictator, above criticism; whatever he wanted must be done, whatever he decided must be right.

There was in the Ch'in court a Realist named Li, who held a ministerial post under the unscrupulous Lü. The king was only

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thirteen years old but he showed abilities. He showed, also, that he could be cruel. He wanted to make drastic changes in his kingdom but was careful to avoid upsetting too many people at once, and he did not allow any of his ministers to dominate him. The realist policy of Li appealed to the young king, who in secret dreamed of conquering all China.

He began by organising the life of his subjects so as to obtain the greatest possible efficiency. Laws were made to cover every event and were enforced by sharp punishments. Every man was made liable for a term of military service and army officials were rewarded with special privileges. The power of the nobles was taken from them and instead everything was managed by the king and his ministers. Thus the young ruler of Ch'in, with the help of Li, organised a very efficient kingdom in which the subjects enjoyed unusual prosperity and were not molested, either by a tyrannous nobility or by the armies of neighbouring kings. But, alas for the people, what they gained in prosperity had to be paid for in freedom.

The successful king grew so confident that he could afford to quarrel with the ex-merchant Lü over a court scandal, and banished him. Lü, fearing a worse fate might follow, took poison and died. So his investment in a royal prince was not so profitable after all.

At the same time the king banished his own mother, who was involved in the scandal, and murdered two of her children, his half-brothers. The murder of these infants was bad enough; but, to Chinese minds, the sending of the Queen Mother in poverty to a remote place was even more serious, for it was a crime against filial piety.

The influence of Confucius was great, notwithstanding the momentary triumph of the rival school of Realists; and, in *The Book of Filial Duty*, Confucius is credited with saying, "The emperor first sets an example to his subjects by showing a dear love to his mother." Some of the scholars at court were bold enough to protest. They reminded the king of his filial duty and petitioned for the Queen Mother's return. The young ruler, angered by this advice, issued an edict forbidding anyone to mention the matter on pain of death. Scholarship and courage often go together, and twenty-seven scholars, disregarding the

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might be tempted some day to plot treason, were ordered to come and live in the capital, then at a place named Hsien Yang, where they would be under close observation.

A dictator must be always boasting of his success, partly to satisfy his self-consuming ambition and partly to offset any criticism by his subjects. The First Emperor made his success evident by building an enormous palace, said to contain "ten thousand rooms"; and by erecting around his capital exact copies of the palaces of the six kings he had defeated. He seldom appeared in public, but when he did, it was with astonishing splendour.

One of the problems facing the First Emperor was the large number of ex-soldiers from the defeated armies. He took away their weapons but he dared not leave them unemployed. So he ordered vast public works, such as road building, canal construction, irrigation and, especially, the building of the famous Great Wall of China.

The First Emperor was never afraid of doing things in a big way and this defensive wall, to shut out the barbarians from raiding the north of China, was a gigantic undertaking. Former kings built walls to protect their people, but the First Emperor planned a continuous wall from the sea right across the northern frontier to the almost impassable desert, more than a thousand miles away. Actually, with loops and bends and a double wall in especially dangerous places, the Great Wall is calculated to be two thousand five hundred miles long, and most of it was constructed at this time. The height of the wall varies from twenty to thirty feet, with towers forty feet high at intervals of two hundred yards. It climbs mountains of four thousand feet in height and the western terminal is nearly a mile above sea level. The work of construction, with the necessary roads, gates and barracks, employed hundreds of thousands of workers, dragged from their homes like so many slaves to toil for unspecified years.

One can only imagine the misery and suffering of this army of homeless labourers, but the First Emperor was a Realist, and to the Realist human suffering means little so long as the work makes for efficiency. Ex-soldiers, convicts, disgraced civil servants, scholars who had fallen foul of the emperor or his ministers, were all sent to work on the wall. Many, unused to the bitter cold of

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the winter winds that blow from the Siberian plains, and the hot dusty weather of the northern summer, perished beside the wall that was being erected for their protection.

No wonder the project was unpopular. A folk tale tells the grief of a woman whose husband was sent to the wall and died there. Believing his spirit could not rest unless his body was properly buried she travelled "ten thousand miles", but sought in vain for the corpse. In despair the woman wept for days and nights, until even the insensate wall was touched and a part collapsed to disclose the body! This old folk tale and many poems about the homesick workers reveal the bitter memory left by the stupendous undertaking. It is true the wall served some good purpose in defending China from the barbarians, though how effective it was is disputed. Large parts of the wall remain to this day, like a great scratch across the forehead of eastern Asia, a memorial to the big ideas of a ruthless emperor, and a reminder of the stupidity of war.

If the First Emperor was an exacting taskmaster, neither did he spare himself. He made frequent tours of inspection to see with his own eyes how the civil servants were doing their duty, to investigate complaints and to gain first-hand information about the progress of his reforms. During the early part of his reign he actually walked on foot great distances on these inspections. He overhauled the system of taxation, started a copper coinage in place of the old-time use of cowrie shells for money, standardised the sizes of agricultural implements and introduced uniform weights and measures. During one of his journeys, he noticed that in the soft soil of North China cartwheels formed deep ruts and that the varying sizes of cart-axles therefore made it impossible for vehicles from one district to use the roads in another. So he fixed a common length for all axles.

Nor was the First Emperor content to unify China only in form of government and in practical matters. Hitherto the script of the Chinese language varied in each kingdom. He introduced a new uniform script so that words were written in the same way everywhere. This new script underwent some changes in later times but it remains the basis of the written Chinese language to-day.

Education was a troublesome matter for the First Emperor

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discovered he took care to provide for himself a magnificent tomb, worthy of the founder of a dynasty that was to last for ten thousand generations. According to one record, as many as seven hundred thousand men were employed to excavate a large chamber beneath one of the Black Horse Hills. The floor of this tomb was covered with metal in the shape of a map of the empire, with lakes and rivers marked in quicksilver. The domed roof was studded with stars made of priceless jewels to reflect the light from "everlasting" lamps. These lamps were filled automatically from reservoirs of oil from "a strange fish known as the man-fish because of its human-like shape"—(probably the walrus, the porpoise or the dugong). The lamps were "everlasting" because there was sufficient oil for them to burn for an incalculably long time. The entrance passages to the tomb were arranged like a maze, so complicated that only a few selected guides knew their secret.

Because the First Emperor feared assassination he appeared before his people very rarely and, now, when he travelled, did so in secret. It was a crime, instantly punishable with death, for any of his retinue to disclose his whereabouts.

On one such journey, when with his Minister Li he was far from the capital, inspecting the Eastern provinces, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti died suddenly, aged only fifty.

Li had cause to be alarmed by his master's unexpected death. The emperor's banished son, who would now succeed his father, was not likely to favour a minister who had been the indirect cause of his banishment. As soon as the young prince heard of his father's death he would hasten to the capital, accompanied by soldiers from the Great Wall. The people, long since tired of the "First" Emperor's ruthless rule, would acclaim his more enlightened son; and all this would take place before Li could even reach the capital.

So Li considered what he should do, and then acted with coolness and cunning. As yet only five or six of the emperor's personal servants knew he was dead. Li decided the news must be kept secret as long as possible.

He ordered that the curtains of the royal chariot were to be kept drawn, so that none might see the royal corpse within. Then he assembled the imperial retinue, with the emperor's

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chariot and his own carriage, with the many baggage wagons necessary when his master travelled, with mounted secretaries and attendants and with the bodyguard of soldiers; and the whole cavalcade set forth on the long return journey to the capital. The common people were never allowed to use the wide roads constructed by their forced labour, but those who, from afar, watched the passing of the imperial procession may well have cursed in silence the ruler who rode so silently within the royal chariot. None guessed his reign of tyranny was over.

This occurred in the heat of midsummer, and as the days passed, while the procession made its way from east to west of China, the corpse began to decompose. The anxious Li arranged for a cart containing rancid fish to follow immediately behind the emperor's chariot, lest the attending soldiers should wonder at the smell and guess what had happened. Thus the "First" Emperor, who tried so hard to evade death, and so much wanted his mortal body to be immortal, came at last to his costly tomb, trailed by stinking fish.

While the procession was still careering across China in unseemly haste, Li forged an order from the dead ruler to his banished son telling the prince to commit suicide. To ignore such an order, had it been genuine, would be to invite a worse death, and the prince, deceived by the minister's forgery, destroyed himself.

When Li reached the capital, he placed the First Emperor's second son on the Dragon Throne and then arranged the burial of his master. Within the great tomb the coffin was placed in the centre of the map of the empire which Ch'in Shih Huang Ti had unified, the "everlasting" lamps were lit, the jewel stars shone down on the dead Son of Heaven and, then, the inner tomb was sealed. The hapless workmen who finished this task, and the guides who alone knew the labyrinth of passages, found themselves trapped by an automatic door, and were thus buried alive with their secret, in the outer chamber of their master's grave. Hidden cross-bows were fixed to discharge arrows against anyone who approached the tomb, grass was replaced where the earth of the Black Horse Hills had been disturbed; and, finally, trees were planted to hide the place for ever.

Some modern western writers accuse the Chinese of prejudice against the First Emperor, pointing out that in those days there

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were many tyrants as ruthless as he. The Chinese say he "left an empire of complaining subjects" and committed an unforgivable sin in the burning of the books. We cannot tell what wisdom was lost to mankind when those early Chinese books crackled in the bonfires ordered by Ch'in Shih Huang Ti. By the time it was safe to bring hidden books from their secret places, some had perished and some were forgotten. The remainder were cherished carefully, perhaps all the more carefully because they had been banned. The standardising of the written script of the Chinese language was one of the First Emperor's good deeds, but when the old books became available they had to be rewritten in the new script and the original meaning of some words was unintentionally changed.

Soon after the death of the First Emperor, his Minister Li quarrelled with a rival, fell from favour into disgrace and perished while undergoing torture.

What happened to the Ch'in Dynasty? The young man placed on the throne by Li inherited his father's vanity and arrogance, but lacked the First Emperor's efficiency and drive. Rebellions broke out, for the Chinese were weary of dictatorship, and within three years the "Second" Emperor was assassinated. His successor, the "Third" Emperor reigned only forty-three days and then died at the hands of rebels. So ended the dynasty that was to last "down to the ten thousandth generation".

## PAN CHAO

### THE WOMAN HISTORIAN

(About A.D. 48-118)

ABOUT the year A.D. 60 some serving-men, dressed in bright red jackets, passed slowly along the yellow dusty pathways of the province of Shensi in North China. They were going from the House of the Pan family to the House of the Ts'ao family and they carried bundles slung from long bamboo poles, each pole supported by two bearers. It was the *trousseau* of a bride and some gifts for the bridegroom's family.

There is a verse in *The Book of Songs* which reads:

*How do we proceed in hewing an axe-handle?  
Without another axe it cannot be done.  
How do we proceed in taking a wife?  
Without a "go-between" it cannot be done.*

A "go-between" had long since arranged a marriage between one of the Pan girls and a Ts'ao boy. She conducted negotiations between the two families, fixing every detail, although no one thought of consulting either the girl or the boy; who, indeed, had never met.

The name Pan means, in the local dialect, "tiger"; and there was a family legend that an early ancestor, in very remote times, had been left as a baby to die in a swamp and been suckled by a tigress till his grandparents rescued him. He had been named "Tiger Milk", or, in full, "He-who-was-nourished-with-the-milk-of-a-tigress", and so the family came to be known as "The Tigers".

The girl about to be married into the Ts'ao family was Pan Chao. Chao is the personal name or *ming*, meaning "luminous". Her father, a mild scholarly man, bore a trace of the remarkable family legend for he was called "Tiger-striped". The Pans were not rich but they were much respected. Many of the family had been scholars, and for at least eighty years before Pan Chao was



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born there had been always one or more Pans amongst the scholars at the emperor's court. One emperor actually presented a Pan with "rare and precious books", which were treasured in the family library.

In those days there were some good schools for boys in China; though it was only the more fortunate who had the chance to attend them. There were no girls' schools and hardly anyone thought it worth while to teach girls to read or write. Spinning, weaving, sewing and embroidery were good enough for girls. Pan Chao was an exception, for although her father, "Tiger-striped", died when she was very young, he honoured the tradition of scholarship in the family and wished his daughter to study the great books of the past. His own poems and historical writings were "enough to fill nine books", and little Pan Chao was proud to belong to such a learned family.

She was now fourteen years old, the age settled with the "go-between" for her marriage, and as she watched the servants bustling about in the court-yard, tugging at the hemp cords round the bundles of her *trousseau*, she sighed to think she must follow them in a few days. It was not that she feared marriage with a boy she had never seen. Sooner or later that happened to every girl. The mother she loved and the elders in the family, maybe an uncle or two and a grandparent, had discussed everything with the "go-between", and made this match for her good and in the interests of the family. She sighed because life at home was so very happy. Her twin brothers, almost twice her age, knew so much; especially Ku, who was already a scholar of repute. She had been brought up amongst books and knew enough of them to want to know a lot more. And now she was to leave it all, join the family of a stranger and undertake heavy duties which would put an end to all studies.

When the morning came for Pan Chao to enter the scarlet bridal-chair, she went first to the Ancestral Tablets in the guest-room of her old home and, prostrating herself before them, told the spirits of her forefathers that she was about to join the Ts'ao family. She asked the spirits to intercede with Heaven to help her perform her part worthily, lest through ignorance or want of humility she disgrace the Pans.

As a child, Pan Chao had worked diligently at her books but

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her mother saw to it that she knew, also, what was expected of a young wife. It was usual for a mother's parting words to be the quotation from the sage Mencius, "When you arrive in your new home, be respectful and careful in your behaviour and do not disobey your husband." The Chinese word for "wife" is written by putting together two other words, "woman" and "broom"—evidence that the Chinese, in the old days, regarded good housewifery as an important qualification in a wife. When, many years later, Pan Chao wrote, "at the age of fourteen I took up the dustpan and the broom in the Ts'ao family," she used a poetic phrase that everyone understood. She might have said simply, "at the age of fourteen I married into the Ts'ao family". Every young bride was expected to be a satisfactory cook, a patient needlewoman, good at embroidery and able to spin silk and weave cloth.

Pan Chao could do all these things, and had learnt much about the conduct of young wives from watching her sisters-in-law, as they went about their duties in the large family home of the Pans. What worried her, as she jolted along in the bridal-chair with its stuffy close-drawn curtains, was a fear that she might make a mistake in the complicated wedding ceremonies. Of course her mother had instructed her fully, but there was so much to remember that she felt rather like an actress with a very important part. She had studied the part carefully and, for the honour of the Pan family, must go through the performance without needing a prompter.

She must remember to use both hands when giving her husband's father the ceremonial cup of wine, and she must not hesitate when the moment came to kneel before her mother-in-law and bow to the ground twice. Better be a little too quick than too slow; but every movement must be dignified. Then there was the terrifying ordeal in the bridal chamber, with its embroidered silk scroll bearing the good-luck wish, "may you have a hundred sons and a thousand grandsons". She could read the scroll, though most brides had to be told the meaning of the large embroidered words. In there, seated on the bed, she would have the bridal coronet of pearls removed from her head and then, for the first time, her husband and all the wedding guests would see her face clearly. The eyes of many curious strangers would be fastened upon her and, as was customary, everyone would pass

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loud remarks on her beauty, or murmur about her lack of it. She would be teased and asked silly riddles, and some of the men guests might be under the influence of wine; but whatever they said she must take it all in good part.

The journey to the Ts'ao home was long and exhausting, but at last the bearers halted and set down the sedan chair. Then came the tap of a fan on the curtained window and the door was opened by the bridegroom. However anxious Pan Chao was to see what kind of man the bridegroom was, it would be contrary to propriety to peep at him from behind her red silk veil and the elaborate head-dress with its festooned jewels; besides she had to step carefully from the chair and remember her part. Someone set light to a little wisp of dried grass on the path and, as it smouldered, the bride ran over it, in order that any evil spirit which might have slipped into the bridal-chair, as it jogged along the public path, would be scared away and not accompany her into the new home.

The bridegroom led Pan Chao through a court-yard to the Eastern Flower Hall. There, bride and bridegroom bowed low to each other, after which he, with clumsy fingers, removed her veil. They walked together to the Ancestral Tablets and, kneeling side by side, bowed to the ground several times, worshipping Heaven and the Ts'ao ancestors.

Then came the Feast of Harmony. Wine was poured into the two halves of a dried gourd. The bridegroom took a sip from one, while an attendant matron held the other to Pan Chao's lips. A little wine was then poured from each "cup" into the other, and the "mingled" wine was sipped by bride and bridegroom—a symbol of their union.

Thus Pan Chao became one of the family of Ts'ao and pledged herself henceforward to be loyal to her husband's clan. In all these ceremonies, and during the ordeal of the bridal chamber, the bride played her part without faltering and did not disgrace the family of Pan.

It is probable that the House of Ts'ao consisted of many rooms and court-yards, all enclosed within a great wall. Pan Chao and her husband had a room of their own, but throughout the day they worked and had their meals with the rest of the family, which may have included a number of married brothers with

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their wives and children. The women of this large household seldom went into the outside world. What fresh air they got was to be had in the court-yard, known as Heaven's Well, in the centre of the women's apartments.

There is an English saying, "Early to bed, early to rise", but in the oldest of all Chinese books, *The Book of Songs*, it is written:

*Rising early and going to bed late  
Do not disgrace those who gave you birth.*

Now that Pan Chao was married she had to rise early to wait upon her mother-in-law; and she could not go to bed after a hard day's work until she had seen her husband's parents settled comfortably for the night. Many years later, writing of this period of her life, she said, "At dawn and at nightfall my heart suffered bitter apprehension." What she feared was that her critical mother-in-law would be so displeased with her work that she would be "dismissed in disgrace", parted from her young husband and sent back home, thus bringing shame to the Pan family. For though Pan Chao was now a married woman her position in the large household was quite an inferior one. No young wife would dare to dispute with her mother-in-law and, had she done so, her husband would not have taken her part but from filial duty would have sided with his mother. She must be careful, too, not to offend her sisters-in-law and in all things to show humble loyalty to the family she had joined.

This state of affairs seems, to Western peoples, so extraordinary that some writers have made too much of it. In most Chinese homes young wives were treated kindly; and if every girl knew that her housework and sewing would be examined with critical eyes, it probably helped her to keep up to the mark. As to Pan Chao, she certainly worked hard and "did not complain of weariness".

A year or two slipped by and once again messengers passed between the two families; this time going from the House of Ts'ao to the House of Pan, carrying the glad news that Pan Chao had a son. There was great rejoicing. Pan Chao became at once a person of some importance and her husband spoke of her proudly as "the mother of my son". Why, it might have been

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only a girl! But Heaven had blessed the marriage with a son, who, in time, would offer sacrifices to the ancestors of the Ts'ao family. When the baby was a month old there was a great feast with much giving and receiving of presents. Even the old "go-between" was honoured with a substantial gift.

A few more years passed, during which two girls were born, and then came tragedy, for Pan Chao's husband died suddenly.

No one knows exactly what happened after that. It would have been in keeping with Chinese custom if the widow and her three children had remained in the House of Ts'ao, but it seems probable that Pan Chao went back to her old home and lived there with her brother, the scholar Pan Ku. There are reasons for thinking that although Pan Chao observed strictly the rule of obedience to her husband's parents, she was not altogether happy in his family; but of this we cannot be sure.

Pan Chao was about twenty years old when she returned to live in the household of her brother. She found him hard at work completing a history of Chinese civilisation which had been begun by their father, "Tiger-striped". Doubtless she helped Ku in many small ways; keeping clean his ink slab, making sure he had good pen-brushes and sticks of solid Chinese ink, taking care of old manuscripts and preparing strips of bamboo on which he could write. It was said of Pan Ku that "he did not make divisions into paragraphs and sentences but got the general sense and no more"; and that he "immersed himself" in his work, "grinding at" his studies.

Pan Chao was happy to be back again in the company of books and before long she found time to study. Ku was an amiable man and popular with other scholars, but there must have been someone with a grudge against him, for one day the quiet household was disturbed by officials with orders to arrest Ku and seize his books.

In the book he was then writing occurs this sentence, "After the death of Confucius, there was an end of his exquisite words; and when his seventy disciples had passed away, violence began to be done to their meaning". This was true; and the infamous "Burning of the Books" by Ch'in Shih Huang Ti added to the confusion. But the age in which Pan Ku and his sister lived was one of peace within the wide borders of China; and the emperor,

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himself no mean scholar, kept a number of learned men at court to collect and study old records and to compile from them "official" histories, which might recapture the original teaching of Confucius, and be free from the false interpretations that had arisen in more troublesome times.

Someone informed the emperor that Pan Ku, though not an official but merely a private individual, had taken upon himself to correct and rewrite the history of China. Such a serious charge might easily lead to Ku's execution and, when he was arrested, Pan Chao was in deep distress. Her other brother, a promising young official, was informed and he rode in haste to the capital, then at Loyang. He submitted a petition to the Son of Heaven, explaining the kind of book that Ku was writing. The emperor sent for the manuscript and read it. He was so impressed by the work that he released Pan Ku from prison and ordered him to join the Department of the Editing of Books.

At first Ku was given the task of editing rare books in the Imperial Library, and, when he had done this to the emperor's satisfaction, he was allowed to continue his own history. Pan Chao moved to the capital with her brother and, it seems, took an active part in his work. Modern scholars credit her with nearly a quarter of the ten-volume history. It is said of the book that "among the learned" of that time "there was none but read it"; and it survives to this day as one of the great histories of China. For about twenty years brother and sister worked together in peace, and then, the emperor having died, there was political trouble in which Pan Ku became involved. He was arrested by a magistrate who had some private dispute with the Pan family, and before he could be brought for trial died in prison.

About this time Pan Chao's son was made a district official, in a small town one hundred and eighty miles to the east of the capital, and she went with him when he took up his appointment. She wrote a poem, entitled *Travelling Eastward*, describing the journey:

*Already we leave the old and start for the new.  
I am uneasy in mind, and sad at heart.*

Officials, like Pan Chao's son, who were sent by the emperor to rule in various provinces and outlying parts of the country

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were selected from the scholar class by competitive examination. Though they all wanted to get such appointments, success was not an unmixed blessing; for, instead of life at the capital with all its culture, they had to live in small towns where there were no libraries and few fellow scholars. So we find many poems written by officials lamenting their "banishment", wistfully recalling the scholar friends they have left behind and generally bemoaning their uncultured lot. Sometimes officials who got into trouble at the capital were, literally, banished to distant "barbarian" provinces as a punishment.

As Pan Chao jolted along the highway, in an uncomfortable springless carriage, she looked forward with trepidation to the small-town life she was to lead:

*Suppressing my feelings, I sigh and blame myself;  
I shall not need to dwell in nests, nor eat worms from dead trees.*

This was a whimsical reference to the old history records she knew so well, which spoke of primitive men who dwelt in trees. It would not be quite so bad as that; and after all, other people have to live in provincial towns! Did not Confucius himself say that "to cling to one's native place characterises a small nature"? All the same, Pan Chao, in her poem, had to confess, "secretly I sigh for the capital city I love".

But the journey was interesting, for the Pans were ardent Confucianists and she travelled through country rich in history. She saw the tomb of a friend of Confucius about whom her brother Ku had written; elsewhere she came to the town where "that holy man" was mistaken for another and his life endangered by an angry mob.

Fortunately it was not long before the emperor commanded Pan Chao to return to the Court Library to finish the famous history. She became, in effect, Court Historian, and was often summoned into the august presence to discuss with the Son of Heaven matters of historical doubt. The emperor was greatly impressed with her knowledge and, when anything exciting happened in public affairs, he would order her to write a poem about it, so that she was not only Court Historian but also a kind of Poet Laureate. Where else but in China

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could such a thing have happened to a woman in the year 100?

These were great honours in an age of scholarship, when the Chinese were producing works of art and learning that have survived for more than eighteen hundred years. But a greater honour was coming to Pan Chao. She was made teacher to the empress, then a girl of fifteen. The emperor ordered the Ladies of the Court to address her as "Great Aunt Ts'ao", the word "aunt" being a term of respect. Moreover she had a number of young men scholars to work under her in the library, some of whom became famous. One of her students invented a simple device, which has been used ever since, to show when words in a Chinese book are a quotation.

Pan Chao, now middle-aged, became concerned for her surviving brother, who was far away in the West. He had distinguished himself as an administrator in the wild parts of Central Asia, under Chinese rule. For years he lived and worked there; and with such success that he brought a Chinese army to the very shores of the Caspian Sea. Now he was old and anxious to come home, but could not do so without the emperor's consent. So Pan Chao wrote a petition to the Son of Heaven, setting forth the services rendered by her brother and asking that he might be allowed to retire.

That a document of such trifling importance should have survived to our own day is remarkable; but in China scholarship was so respected that a petition to the throne had to be a work of art. The painting of the actual words was done beautifully, and though the language seems to us absurdly exaggerated, it conformed to a convention of the times and contained classical references without which it would have been thought a very poor piece of work.

Pan Chao's brother had been made a marquis and his post was of considerable importance, but she began her petition with the suggestion that the emperor had honoured him far too generously, "this imperial favour truly far surpasses what a small official ought to receive". She said her brother, three thousand miles away, was longing "with outstretched neck" to return. "He is hard pressed by old age and like a horse or dog, that has long served his master, he has lost his teeth." She feared that unless he was soon relieved of his arduous post "he will



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one morning encounter a sudden change"; a poetical way of saying he might die.

The emperor granted Pan Chao her wish and the veteran administrator was ordered to return to court. The difficult journey, over mountains and deserts, took many months and so exhausted the old man that he died a few weeks after getting home. But it was a great joy to Pan Chao to welcome her brother and doubtless he told her of many interesting things; of strange "barbarian" tribes in the West, of exiled soldiers who longed for home, of monks from India who actually renounced all family ties to preach the strange faith of Buddha, and rumours of more "barbarians" further west called Romans. To an historian like Pan Chao such matters were of absorbing interest.

In the year 105, Pan Chao saw one of the most remarkable inventions of all time. An official at court discovered how to make paper. He used "the bark of trees, hemp, rags and fish nets". This was six hundred years before similar paper was made by the Arabs, who probably learnt how to do it from the Chinese; and a thousand years before paper was made in Europe. The old writing materials like bamboo-strips, silk, papyrus and parchment were either cumbersome or costly and therefore limited in supply, but the new invention made possible the production of comparatively cheap books. Perhaps no other invention, except printing, which the Chinese developed later, has made so much difference to mankind.

To Pan Chao, a writer of books and poems, such a stupendous invention must have been thrilling, and we can picture her, in the Court Library, wetting her brush pen with good black ink and testing the new material. The fine texture of silk goes well with the strong yet delicate lines of Chinese characters, and it was some time before paper entirely replaced silk in general use; but paper, besides being cheap, had the great advantage that it could be bound into volumes.

The emperor who so honoured Pan Chao died, and was succeeded by an infant who lived only one year; and then by a boy of thirteen. Notwithstanding these changes, Pan Chao's influence at court increased; for the empress who had been her pupil became Regent. *Tread not upon the shadow of your teacher* runs the proverb, and the empress, at this time twenty-five years

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old, naturally sought advice from "Great Aunt Ts'ao", who was about sixty.

Pan Chao was consulted in many of the affairs of state of what was then, perhaps, the foremost country of the world. One matter concerned the retirement of the "Four Uncles", a polite term of address for the brothers of the empress, and Pan Chao again petitioned the throne. She ended her advice with traditional humility:

To reach this conclusion your humble servant has exhausted her stupid self, both in mind and in feelings. Although she knows her words are not worth the consideration of Your Majesty, nevertheless they reveal the deep feeling of your handmaiden, worm that she is.

There is little more to relate of Pan Chao's life: her son became a marquis and wore the coveted Gold Seal and Blue Ribbon, but we do not know what happened to her daughters. She died when she was about seventy, and was so loved and respected that the empress ordered an official mourning period and herself wore half-mourning.

The fact that Pan Chao acted as Court Historian, her influence over the Empress Regent and the sixteen books of history, essays and poems which she wrote would be sufficient to secure her a permanent place in Chinese History, but her most remarkable achievement is yet to be mentioned.

Some time before the year 106, Pan Chao wrote seven short chapters entitled, *Lessons for Women*. They began, "I, the writer, am a lowly person with but a monkey's wit," and they were addressed to young unmarried women who had not been "soaked in the waters of instruction".

In this book she accepted the general idea of her times that there was a superior social class. They were not superior because they had money, indeed they might be quite poor, but because they were educated. Likewise she accepted the idea that women were inferior to men, in the sense that they must be always obedient to men and dependent on them economically. Men and women had different duties in life; and the lessons she wished young women to learn before they

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married were necessary if there was to be happiness in the home.

Pan Chao was thinking of her own short married life when she wrote:

Let a woman retire late to bed, but rise early to duties; let her not dread tasks by day or by night. Let her not refuse to perform domestic duties whether easy or difficult. That which must be done let her finish completely, tidily and systematically.

Humility, obedience, respect for others, devotion to duties, modesty—all the dull and tiresome virtues—were preached by Pan Chao in her *Lessons for Women*; but she could be critical of young men too. She quoted the proverb, *a man though born like a wolf may become a weak monstrosity; a woman though born like a mouse may become a tiger*; and Pan Chao made the revolutionary suggestion, astonishing at such a period, that girls should be given the same education as boys up to the age of fifteen. They should be taught reading, writing and history and learn the Chinese Classics. "Only to teach boys and not to teach girls—is that not ignoring the essential relation between men and women?" Happy marriage means companionship between husband and wife, that is the "essential relation"; and how can it be possible, asked Pan Chao, if the wife has not been taught to take an interest in the same kind of things that her husband does?

*Lessons for Women* was esteemed highly by scholars, and for centuries the Chinese people have loved the book for its moral teachings, but her idea of a general education for girls was far too revolutionary. Sometimes wise men, like old "Tiger-striped", arranged for their daughters to go to school with their sons, or be taught at home, but it was not until the twentieth century that Pan Chao's suggestion was adopted officially by her countrymen.

## FA-HSIEN

### THE GREAT TRAVELLER

(About A.D. 400)

ABOUT the year 375, a family named Kung sent one of their boys to a Buddhist monastery. The child's name was changed to Fa-hsien, which has a religious significance; and he lived amongst priests until he was himself ordained.

The loud booming of a monastery gong woke young Fa-hsien every day before dawn. After long prayers and silent meditation, he went with other priests begging food from the people who lived near-by. With downcast eyes, and without speaking, the priests walked from house to house, their wooden bowls held out to receive whatever food was offered. Back in the monastery they ate this food, and then settled down to many hours of study, the young priests learning to read and write, while the older ones examined the Buddhist scriptures.

The founder of this religion, Gautama Buddha, is said to have lived in India about the year 450 B.C., and there had been Buddhists in China for three hundred years before Fa-hsien's day. The scriptures they read were translated into Chinese from various Indian languages.

Day by day, Fa-hsien and other young priests discussed these Buddhist scriptures and, because the translations were poor, they often found the meaning obscure. They compared one version with another, but always without final conviction. Perhaps the Indians, who made the first translations, found the Chinese language too difficult and had mistaken some words; or, not fully understanding the scriptures, had unintentionally twisted the meaning. Fa-hsien and his comrades were perplexed. If only they could compare their books with the original manuscripts!

At last the desire for truth led these young men to a desperate resolve. The holy books of the Faith were far away in India: somehow they would get to India, and there make accurate copies, bringing them back to China. The resolve was desperate because the journey would have to be made on foot, across a

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vast expanse of desert and then over some of the highest mountains in the world. And, what must have seemed a big point to civilised Chinese, they would be often amongst foreign peoples who were said to be "barbarians".

Undaunted by these difficulties the little band of priests, headed by Fa-hsien, set out in the spring of the year 399. For some weeks their route took them over the inhabited uplands of North-West China. Even in those days the Chinese had a common culture and the young priests were still amongst their own people, but there were plenty of new things to be seen; strange towns and villages, some unusual customs of the provinces and exciting mountain ranges in the distance.

Before the end of the hot summer weather the pilgrims halted awhile for a retreat: a few days of quiet meditation and religious exercise. After the retreat they crossed a range of mountains and came into a district, still under Chinese rule, where there was political unrest. Bandits roamed the countryside, so that the local ruler detained Fa-hsien and his companions, keeping them under his protection until the roads were again safe for travellers.

Another halt was made when they reached a little town at the end of the Great Wall, on the verge of the ill-famed Gobi desert. Here the pilgrims were warned, "in this desert there are a great many evil spirits and also hot winds; those who encounter them perish to a man".

The Buddhist faith of those days was, in many ways, beautiful and noble, but even priests believed in the power of innumerable evil spirits and Fa-hsien and his comrades entered the desert in great trepidation. By day they walked "gazing on all sides as far as the eye can reach in order to mark the track", and their only guide was "the rotting bones of dead men, which point the way". By night they huddled together, allaying their fear of devils by repeating prayers; and then sleeping fitfully. In seventeen hard marches they covered a distance of five hundred miles, before reaching a rugged and barren country with a few inhabitants and a monastery, where the monks spoke an Indian language.

The crossing of this first part of the desert was so exhausting that the pilgrims were obliged to rest for a whole month. Then

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they pushed on for another fifteen days and came to a little independent kingdom. They were well received by the king and spent two months there, but all agreed that the people "did not cultivate politeness nor duty to one's neighbours", both serious defects to Chinese minds.

The next stage of the journey was one of the worst. For thirty-five days the pilgrims struggled through difficult country, without seeing any human life but meeting "hardship beyond all comparison". They had to cross the Tarim river and some of its tributaries and then face hundreds of miles of the Tarim desert. When they reached Khotan, at the foot of the northern slopes of the great Himalaya mountains, they were more dead than alive. Luckily, they found in this remote place a monastery where they were welcomed. It was a large monastery, for Fa-hsien wrote:

At the sound of a gong, three thousand priests assembled to eat . . . they sit down in regular order; they all keep silence; they make no clatter with their bowls and for the attendants to serve more food they do not call to them but only make signs with their hands.

After the jollity of a Chinese meal, where it is polite to make plenty of noise to show how much one is enjoying oneself, this silent banquet of three thousand priests struck Fa-hsien as very extraordinary.

The pilgrims were now, roughly, a thousand miles due north of the part of India they wanted to reach, but there were impassable mountains barring the way. The only possible route was five hundred miles, or so, north-west and then a wide sweep of a thousand miles, or more, into Afghanistan; and so through the north-west frontier regions into Western India. These distances make no allowance for the twists and turns of mountain paths and passes. The actual distance to be walked by Fa-hsien and his companions was, at least, twice as far.

Meanwhile the region round Khotan was full of interest, for there were festivals and religious processions such as were not to be seen in China. Some of Fa-hsien's party went on ahead, but he stayed and noted carefully all that these people did in

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honour of Buddha. When, at last, he left Khotan he had been away from home nearly a year, and with a touch of nostalgia he recorded in his diary that the trees and plants he now saw were unlike those he knew in China. After fifty-four days of strenuous travel, Fa-hsien caught up with his countrymen and, at Kashgar, had a short rest before tackling the mountain ranges.

The pilgrims had to cross mountains where "there is snow in winter and summer alike", and they were warned of "venomous dragons, which, if provoked, spit forth poisonous winds, rain, snow, sand and stones". The Chinese firmly believe in dragons, wonderful and mysterious beasts which can make themselves invisible; but unlike these horrible creatures of the Indian mountains, Chinese dragons are always good-natured and friendly to mankind. The Chinese dragon has eighty-one scales, nine times nine being an exceptionally lucky number, and the most common type has four claws like an eagle; but there is a rare kind with five claws and he is the emblem of the emperor. The Chinese throne was called "the Dragon's Seat", the emperor's person was "the Dragon's Person", his hands "the Dragon's Claws", his children "the Dragon's Seed", and the usual way of reporting an emperor's death was to announce that he had "ascended upon the Dragon to be a guest on high".

It was a shock to Fa-hsien to learn that in the cold mountains he might find a hostile dragon, who would spit poisonous winds at him and that "of those who meet these creatures not one in ten thousand escapes!"

However, fear of unknown evils was driven away by practical hardships and sorrow, for the pilgrims came to a precipitous mountain which they were not far wrong in describing as "like a stone wall ten thousand feet in height . . . on nearing the edge the eye becomes confused; and wishing to advance the foot finds no resting place". They climbed one precipice by seven hundred steps cut in the face of the rock and they crossed ravines by rope suspension bridges. One of the pilgrims exhausted by his efforts died; others, abandoning the quest, turned back towards China.

*Such travelling is harder than scaling the blue sky.  
Even to hear of it turns the cheek pale,*

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*With the highest crag barely a foot below heaven.  
Dry pines hang, head down, from the face of the cliffs,  
And a thousand plunging cataracts out roar one another  
And send through ten thousand valleys a thunder of spinning stones.  
With all this danger upon danger,  
Why do people come here who live at a safe distance?*

Fa-hsien, with only two companions, struggled on for many days amidst the vast mountain regions at the western end of the Himalayas. It was "frightfully cold, and when a gale gets up, it makes one shut the mouth and shiver". Before long this intense cold claimed another victim, who collapsed "foaming at the mouth". He urged his two comrades to leave him to die alone, saying, "do not let us all pass away here". But Fa-hsien would not abandon his friend and stayed beside him till he died.

Then, in great grief, Fa-Hsien was tempted to turn back. "Our original design cannot be carried out," he cried to his remaining companion, "it is destiny, what is there to be done?" Perhaps, by retracing their steps, they might catch up with the others who were going home to China? On the bleak mountain-side, with his dead friend's body frozen at his feet, Fa-hsien thought of the millions of Chinese who could not learn the truth about Gautama Buddha because their scriptures were badly translated, and he decided to go on.

Soon the two pilgrims got to the summit of the pass and found it easier going. They reached Afghanistan and, coming to a monastery in that wild country, kept their summer retreat. Another long march took them over the north-west frontier into India. Many years later, when Fa-hsien wrote the story of his travels, he said, "Looking back upon what I went through my heart throbs and sweat pours down . . . I did not spare my body because I kept my object steadily in view."

Now that he was in India, Fa-hsien lost no opportunity to see all he could of the ceremonies of Indian Buddhists and to collect religious books and relics. He was impressed, too, by other things, and his account of a Brahman kingdom is striking. Coming from the highly civilised country of China, he yet saw ways in which some Indians did better than his countrymen. "The people are prosperous and happy," he wrote;



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and added, "without registration or official restrictions".

It was still some distance to the birthplace of Buddha and, on the way, Fa-hsien noted such extraordinary things as a city of hump-backed maidens, the shrine of a white-eared dragon who lived on cream, and a place where there were so many small pagodas that the only way to count them was to stand a man beside each and then collect all the men and count them! At Buddha's birthplace the two Chinese were "inexpressibly sad", when they thought of their comrades, some of whom had turned back and some of whom had perished on the way. Next, they made for the place where the World Honoured One, that is to say Buddha, died.

The stories they heard were many and remarkable: one was of "a very bad man with yellow hair and green eyes who used his feet to hook up fishes out of the river and his mouth to whistle birds and beasts which he promptly killed, not a single one escaping". Buddha taught that one must not kill even an insect, so that this ingenious hunter was a notorious evil-doer.

For seven years Fa-hsien and his companion wandered about central India, visiting all the holy places connected with Buddha, collecting books and sketching shrines. At last they found, in a monastery, the very book they wanted. There is no contemporary account of the life or the teaching of Buddha in any language; but this book, written in Sanskrit, was the earliest account and set forth the doctrine of the first Buddhists. Sanskrit was unknown to the Chinese, so Fa-hsien settled down to learn it. By the time he had done so and made a copy of the book, and then translated it into Chinese, another three years had passed.

Life in the Indian monastery was very attractive to such devout men as the two Chinese pilgrims, and Fa-hsien's companion decided to remain there for the rest of his life. But Fa-hsien had the true missionary spirit. His quest for truth had been realised at great cost; it would never do to keep the truth to himself when it was needed by others. He packed his manuscripts carefully and prepared to go back to China alone.

To face the perilous mountains and deserts without a comrade was a dreadful prospect, and so Fa-hsien, though a born landsman, decided to risk the unknown dangers of a sea voyage.

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Little did he guess what was before him. Travelling towards the coast leisurely, in order that he might see as many shrines and images as possible, he came at last to the river Hoogly, somewhere near the site of the modern Calcutta. There he took sail in a merchant ship.

After a fortnight at sea the ship reached Ceylon. Fa-hsien was told that this island had been inhabited originally only by devils and dragons. The devils traded with visiting Indians by setting out their wares on the shore, each item marked with its price, and then vanishing till the merchants had taken and paid for what they wanted. Evidently Fa-hsien believed this story implicitly, but it is clear the Ceylon "devils" were primitive native people who adopted this method of trade because they were too timid to meet the Indians face to face. In our own times, country folk in Malaya have been known to trade with Chinese merchants in just the same way.

The Chinese pilgrim spent two years in Ceylon visiting temples, at one of which he met a priest, who "by constant exercise of kindness of heart" persuaded rats and snakes to "live together in the same cell without hurting one another".

Fa-hsien must have longed to hear someone speaking Chinese, and once, at a shrine, was overcome by homesickness. As he stood, "beholding only his own shadow", and thinking of his lost companions, a merchant came to the shrine bringing as an offering a Chinese silk fan. Fa-hsien's feelings got the better of him when he saw that fan and "his eyes filled with tears".

It was so many years since Fa-hsien left his native land that he could no longer be called young. Indeed, it was a middle-aged priest who, with a considerable baggage of books and images, went down to the port in Ceylon and took ship for China. Those who have journeyed far experience a deep joy when starting the homeward passage and Fa-hsien had the additional satisfaction of being able to gaze upon bundles at his side, containing literary treasures beyond price.

The ship was a large one with no less than two hundred persons on board, mostly merchants, and with a smaller vessel in tow. On the second day at sea a storm arose and the larger ship sprang a leak. The panic-stricken merchants tried to escape to the ship in tow, but the men aboard her, fearing to be swamped by

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numbers, cut the tow rope. Then the merchants in desperation began flinging overboard everything they could to lighten the ship, and Fa-hsien looked anxiously at his bundles. He took his water pitcher and ewer and all his other personal belongings and cast them into the sea; then, squatting by his precious books and relics, like a hen guarding her chicks, he prayed to Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, "O that by your awful power you would grant me a safe return from my wanderings."

The Buddhists say there was once a woman who by her good deeds earned the right to go to Heaven. As she was entering this place of everlasting bliss, she turned back to listen to the cry of suffering which rises from the earth; and, in pity, she vowed to postpone her own joy until every living creature had been raised to her own sublime state. The story made a strong appeal to the Chinese, who called the woman the Goddess of Mercy and gave her the name of Kuan Yin, which means, "She who hears the cry of the world".

So Fa-hsien prayed to Kuan Yin and, somehow, through thirteen days and nights while the storm raged, the distracted merchants aboard the slowly sinking ship took no notice of the Chinese priest and his baggage. When the storm blew out, the ship drifted close to an unknown island, and at ebb tide the sailors were able to find the leak and repair it.

Fa-hsien described what happened when they again put to sea:

In cloudy and rainy weather, our vessel drifted at the mercy of the wind, without keeping any definite course. In the darkness of night nothing was to be seen but the great waves beating upon one another and flashing forth light like fire, huge turtles, sea lizards and such-like monsters of the deep. . . . This sea is infested with pirates, to meet whom is death. . . . Then the merchants lost heart, not knowing whither they were going, and the sea being deep, without bottom, they had no place where they could cast their stone-anchor and stop.

For more than three months the vessel floundered without a true course, and all this time Fa-hsien guarded his books and images and comforted his fearful heart with prayers to Kuan Yin.

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At last the ship made a landfall, which proved to be the great island of Java.

After such a rough passage it is not altogether surprising that Fa-hsien remained ashore five months before again setting sail. This time he took passage in a ship provisioned for a voyage of fifty days and bound for the port of Canton. When the land of Java faded from sight the pious priest "went into retreat on board the vessel". The other passengers, merchants and traders returning home to China, observed Fa-hsien with curiosity as he squatted, hour after hour, in silent contemplation. For a month all went well; and then, when they should have been more than half-way to Canton, a violent gale arose in the night. Torrents of rain swept over the ship and the passengers were "much frightened".

They took counsel together; and, as with Jonah in similar circumstances, decided it was ill luck to have this travelling priest aboard. They remembered his queer habit of sitting alone in silence, his muttered prayers and the odd bundles he cherished. This storm showed that Heaven was angry with someone in the ship and it was, doubtless, the priest. "It is not right," they said, "to endanger all our lives for one man." So they determined to maroon Fa-hsien on one of the many uninhabited islands that dot the eastern seas; and there, no doubt, he would have perished of hunger or thirst or, maybe, fallen a victim to some band of marauding pirates. Luckily there was a man aboard brave enough to defend Fa-hsien. He declared he would report the matter to the emperor when the ship reached China and that the emperor would be angry at such treatment of a holy man, who had travelled far for the Faith.

The sky was overcast by frequent storms and the captain lost all reckoning. At the end of fifty days, when they should have been in Canton, they were still out of sight of land and had no idea of their position. The provisions and water were nearly exhausted. They used sea water for cooking and rationed what fresh water remained, every man receiving about one quart. At all costs they must reach land, so they changed course, sailing north-westerly. For a terrible twelve days and nights they saw nothing, and then, on the horizon, a mountain was sighted.

They landed, but could find no inhabitants. So little did they

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know of their whereabouts that some argued they had not yet reached the vicinity of Canton, while others declared they had sailed past the port. Fa-hsien, who had been fifteen years from home, recognised with profound joy "the old familiar vegetables" of China. A small boat was sent exploring up a creek and soon returned with two hunters. The boatmen, who came from Canton, could not understand the speech of these men, but Fa-hsien heard, at last, the familiar dialect of North China. The ship had not only passed Canton but sailed right along the coast of China, past Formosa, through the Yellow Sea to Ch'ang-kuang—a thousand miles too far!

Fa-hsien was received with honour and carried his precious documents to the capital, then at Nanking. Having done what he set out to do, he returned home and "wrote down on bamboo tablets and silk an account of what he had been through, desiring that the gentle reader should share this information".

Buddhism influenced profoundly the thought, art and daily life of the Chinese, but a remark made by a priest when he met Fa-hsien in India was significant. "How is it possible," he asked, "for you foreigners to know that renunciation of family is the essence of our religion?" Buddha told his followers they must seek salvation by freeing themselves from all earthly attachments. It was just this setting aside of family obligations that proved a stumbling-block to the Chinese, who have always held family ties to be most sacred. So the Chinese gradually changed the form of Indian Buddhism to suit their own ideas, and the reshaped Buddhism of China "bears only a faint and superficial resemblance" to the doctrine collected by Fa-hsien.

## LI SHIH-MIN

### THE FOUNDER OF A GREAT DYNASTY

(A.D. 600-649)

A CERTAIN Duke of T'ang, of the family of Li, sat staring in wide-eyed astonishment at his second son, a young man of seventeen, who returned the gaze modestly, but without flinching. "Preposterous!" cried the duke, when his amazement abated. "How dare you use such language? I shall order your arrest." He took up a pen-brush to write the warrant.

The young man, whose full name was Li Shih-min, answered quietly, but firmly, "Your unworthy son merits death. Nevertheless, I only spoke because, as I see it, this is the true state of our affairs to-day. If you arrest me, I am ready to die." The duke hesitated, and then, throwing down his brush, said petulantly, "How could I think of ordering your execution? Never dare to speak like that again!"

After the great Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 220) China suffered partition, being split sometimes into northern and southern kingdoms. The Tartar "barbarians", from beyond the Great Wall, invaded, and for a long time Tartar kings ruled the northern half of the kingdom. These Tartars were gradually absorbed by the Chinese, and at length the country was reunited under a Chinese emperor. He, however, was succeeded by Yang Ti, a weak ruler, who squandered great sums of money on luxurious palaces and ineffective wars, until his unhappy people began a series of rebellions which spread all over the empire.

Before long there were eight pretenders in various parts of China, with their own armies and local capitals, and all claiming to be the Son of Heaven. The position of noblemen, like the Duke of T'ang, was difficult, because if they remained loyal to the emperor, any pretender who managed to usurp the throne would probably execute them. The Duke of T'ang was a weak man, who saw the empire of Yang Ti falling to bits but had no idea what to do. His son, Li Shih-min, thought that if there

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was to be a general scramble to seize the Dragon throne, his branch of the Li family might as well try their luck. Having pointed out the hopelessness of the emperor's cause, he proposed that his father "should raise a righteous army and convert calamity into glory".

Mencius, one of the sages who came after Confucius, made it clear that if an emperor oppressed his subjects he might be deposed; the "mandate of Heaven" would be withdrawn from him. But the great weight of Confucian teaching stressed the virtue of loyalty to a ruler, and the Duke of T'ang had been horrified by his son's proposal.

Shih-min understood his father's vacillating character, and after this first stormy interview came back next day to re-open the subject. "The pretenders increase daily, they are now all over the empire," he said; "the only way to escape danger is to do what I said yesterday." The duke sighed and then answered, "All last night I thought over your words. There is much truth in them. Now if our family is ruined it will be all your fault; but if we mount to the throne it will be equally thanks to you."

Thus it came about that the Duke of T'ang assembled his soldiers and proclaimed to them his intention to revolt.

The first objective of the T'ang army was to seize the province of Shensi, with its capital Ch'ang An. Heavy rains held up their advance and supplies ran short. The timid duke ordered a retreat. Shih-min protested that it was the wrong time to retreat, for as yet they had little popular support; but his father would not listen to him. It was a critical decision and, after the retreat had actually begun, Shih-min forced his way into his father's tent and started arguing all over again. When he saw the old man beginning to waver, he offered to ride at once with counter-orders to the soldiers. The duke consented, saying to his importunate son, "Whether we win or lose will be your responsibility."

In the battle that followed Shih-min slew so many of the enemy that "his sleeves were running with blood". Soon Ch'ang An was captured and the Duke of T'ang entered the famous city.

In the seventh century Ch'ang An was important, covering an area of thirty square miles. Beyond the city was a great park, sixty-three square miles in size, with many lakes, landscape

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gardens, pavilions and a miniature palace. Its capture was a great triumph for the T'ang party, though the duke did not yet dare to call himself the Son of Heaven. Amongst his prisoners was the thirteen-year-old grandson of Yang Ti, and the duke proclaimed this boy emperor.

As for Yang Ti, he remained in his favourite southern capital, feasting, drinking and watching plays as though nothing had happened. He ignored the advice of his ministers and obstinately stuck to his unpopular policies; yet he seems to have foreseen his miserable end. One morning, as he combed his hair before a mirror, he remarked to the empress, "Such a beautiful head! Who would dare to cut it off?" Not many days later the garrison troops mutinied and broke into the palace. They dragged the emperor and his youngest son to the Hall of Audience, where he was wont to grant favours and order punishments. There, an impatient soldier took a sword and cut off the young prince's head. When the child's blood splashed Yang Ti's majestic robe he cried, "The Son of Heaven has his own way of dying. Do not shed my blood, fetch poison." The soldiers, refusing this cowardly appeal, tore off his scarf and with it strangled him on the Dragon Throne.

When news of the assassination reached Ch'ang An, the Duke of T'ang compelled the thirteen-year-old grandson of the murdered emperor to offer him the crown. In accordance with Chinese etiquette, the boy three times urged the duke to accept the crown and three times the duke declared himself to be unworthy; then he accepted and became the first emperor of the great T'ang Dynasty.

By now there were eleven pretenders in the field, some quite as powerful as the new T'ang emperor; and Shih-min, at the age of eighteen, was given the formidable task of defeating them and, at the same time, safeguarding the empire from the raids of the Tartar barbarians. During the next six years he was engaged continuously in this warfare.

Shih-min's campaigns were fought with imagination. Sometimes, when his generals proposed a retreat or a cautious move, he would act boldly. Once, when he had been in armour for three days and nights, he was urged to rest. "Opportunity comes seldom and is easily missed," he replied. At other times, when



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his generals wanted to attack, he would point out that it was better to wait until the enemy had supply difficulties.

Shih-min was cunning in ambush and unconventional in tactics. On one occasion when his army was held up for two months by bad weather he used the time to dam a river and, in due course, enticed the enemy into the valley, and drowned them by breaking the dam. When fighting some Tartars, famed for their use of bows, Shih-min took advantage of heavy rain to attack when the damp had unstrung their weapons. Another time, when attacking a walled city, he set fire to a tower at the south-west angle of the wall during a heavy south-west gale. The fire spread swiftly, driving smoke into the faces of the defenders while his troops, following the flames, fought to great advantage.

During a siege, when Shih-min was riding round the city on reconnaissance, he heard an unusual squawking of fowls. He ordered his troops to stand-to all night in expectation of a sortie. When the enemy attempted this sortie they found Shih-min's soldiers fully prepared and were driven back with heavy loss. "But how did you know the enemy's intention?" asked Shih-min's generals. "The squawking of the fowls showed they were killing many birds," he explained. "After so long a siege, when their provisions must be low, they would only do that to give a feast to picked troops, required for some hazardous attempt, like a sortie; as you see, I was correct."

There are many stories of Shih-min's adventures. The horses on which he fought were often wounded. He owed his life, more than once, to his skilful archery. During a reconnaissance, he and one of his officers dismounted and lay resting on the grass. A snake, chasing a field mouse, darted close in front of the officer's face and so startled him that he sprang to his feet. Then he saw that a hundred of the enemy had crept up, and that he and Shih-min were surrounded. Shih-min, seizing his bow, shot the officer leading the enemy, which so disconcerted the rest that they rode away.

The greatest battle of the war, "one of the decisive battles in the history of the world", was fought around a place called Ssü Shui. One pretender after another had been defeated, but there remained two who were formidable. One of these was

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bottled up by the T'ang army in the city of Loyang, but, while Shih-min besieged this place, the other, with a large army, marched to attack him on his flank. The T'ang generals advised Shih-min to abandon the siege and retreat. Had he done so it would have been the end of any possibility of conquering all China. The country would have remained, for an indefinite period, split between the rival pretenders.

Shih-min took the bold course and, leaving most of his army to continue the siege of Loyang, marched with a comparatively small force to meet the approaching enemy. He seized a defensive position at Ssü Shui and then, characteristically, provoked the enemy with a skirmish. He placed five hundred horsemen in ambush and with only five companions rode to within a mile of the enemy's camp. Galloping close to one of their outposts, Shih-min cried to one of his men, "You with a spear and I with my bow are a match for a million of these fellows." The enemy could not believe any T'ang troops would approach their prepared position; but Shih-min, to make the matter clear, shouted his name and then, with his bow, shot an arrow which killed the officer in command of the outpost. As he intended, this daring deed roused the enemy, who sent out a large body of cavalry. Shih-min's companions "changed colour at this alarming spectacle", but Shih-min, waiting till the foremost were within bowshot, slew the leader.

Three times the enemy advanced, and each time Shih-min, after picking off the leader, retreated a little, drawing the enemy towards his ambush. When the five hundred T'ang horsemen emerged suddenly from their hiding-place, the enemy were so surprised that three hundred were slain and several officers captured before they realised they had been trapped.

After this skirmish, Shih-min fell back on his defensive position. It was not easy to attack, for the enemy would have to descend into a ravine and cross a stream. So the two armies watched each other, each hoping the other would attack; but Shih-min knew he could afford to wait. He drew his supplies from river boats which came down stream on a strong current, while the enemy boats had to toil upstream when fully loaded. Meanwhile the other pretender, besieged in Loyang, was growing weaker and weaker as his food ran short.

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When Shih-min guessed the enemy facing him at Ssü Shui could not wait much longer, he divided his force and, in daylight, sent half away, as though they were needed urgently elsewhere. After dark he brought them all back. The enemy, deceived by these moves, decided to attack and came down into the ravine. Shih-min said to his officers:

The enemy come from the eastern plains, and have never fought in hill country. Now they have come down into the ravine they are in a bad position. . . . We will stand firm and let their courage cool. . . . Presently their troops will become thirsty. . . . At that moment, if we attack, they will be caught in the ravine and routed. I promise you that before evening the victory will be ours.

The action turned out exactly as Shih-min foretold. His small army routed the enemy and captured the pretender. Straightway Shih-min took this important prisoner to Loyang and, leading him to the walls of the hard-pressed city, showed him to the other pretender; who, thereby, realised the hopelessness of his own case. Loyang capitulated; the pretender, wearing mourning robes and with his coffin by his side, came out to surrender to the twenty-one-year-old Shih-min. "They tell me you once said you would like to meet 'that boy'," the victor said cheerfully. "Now you see the boy, how are you going to behave?" The pretender bowed his head and offered apologies.

In an earlier campaign, Shih-min massacred the citizens of a town that twice turned against the T'ang cause. Such severity was not uncommon in that age, though the deed must be recorded against him. His treatment of Loyang was very different. A few traitors were beheaded, but the pretender's life was spared. None of the ordinary citizens was punished in any way. Some of the extravagant palaces of the Emperor Yang Ti were burned, Shih-min declaring they had been built with "the life's blood of the people" and that he destroyed them as a warning against luxury.

With the victory of Ssü Shui and the fall of Loyang the war ended. All north China, from Tibet to the sea, was united under the T'ang Dynasty; only parts of the south remaining to be

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pacified. When Shih-min returned to his father's capital, at Ch'ang An, he rode into the city wearing a golden breastplate, followed by the vanquished pretenders, twenty-five T'ang generals and ten thousand heavily armed cavalry. The ordinary people, thankful for the assurance of peace, turned out in crowds to cheer the young hero.

Emperors of China, unless driven from the throne like Yang Ti, appointed their own successors; usually one of their sons, but not necessarily the eldest. The first T'ang emperor owed his throne, almost entirely, to Shih-min; but at his coronation he proclaimed his eldest son Heir Apparent. Shih-min did not covet this honour; but, unhappily, the Heir Apparent and Shih-min's younger brother were both jealous of his popularity. Perhaps, too, the successful Shih-min, who had spent the greater part of his life on active service, showed some contempt for his brothers, who had been living in safety and comfort at court.

The princes' mother was dead, and the emperor's second wife bore a grudge against Shih-min, because, in the hour of victory, he had rewarded one of his generals with an estate which she wanted for her family. The two jealous brothers tried to get the better of Shih-min by talking against him at court, and the empress blackened his character before the emperor.

Shih-min was quite indifferent to court intrigues, but the quarrel between the brothers gradually became serious. The Heir Apparent, who like his father was a weak character, even went so far as to plot the assassination of Shih-min. He was degraded when this plot was discovered. The empress, however—herself concerned in the plot—used her influence with court officials and, in a short time, the Heir Apparent's rank and title were restored.

Such vacillation on the part of the emperor only encouraged the jealous princes to try again. They found a vicious horse and, knowing their brother's pride in horsemanship, challenged him to ride this uncontrollable beast, hoping he would be thrown and killed. Three times Shih-min mounted the horse and three times was thrown without injury. Then a friend persuaded him to give up the attempt.

After this Shih-min was away from the capital for a year fighting the Tartars, but on his return, more of a popular hero

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than ever, his brothers renewed their attempts on his life. They poisoned his wine at the victory banquet. Fortunately, the dose of poison was excessive. Shih-min was violently sick, fell to the ground vomiting blood, and later recovered.

The emperor, faced with this further attempt, decided to part the brothers once and for all. He proposed to send Shih-min to Loyang and to make him ruler of all the eastern part of China, which was tantamount to making him co-emperor. The brothers, fearing this move, got the empress to persuade the foolish emperor to change his mind once more, and the edict was revoked.

The brothers next tried a more cunning plan. They arranged for Shih-min's friends to be appointed, one by one, to posts in different parts of the empire. Seeing through this move, one of Shih-min's officers warned him, "Your Highness is letting them pluck all your feathers; if it goes on, how long do you think you can keep on flying?"

Another friend, declaring the quarrel must end in bloodshed, urged Shih-min to kill the brothers who had tried so often to kill him. He quoted the saying of Confucius, "small wrongs may be endured, but great evils must be resisted": he reminded Shih-min that even the sage Emperor Shun, when his wicked relatives buried him in a well, did not lie down and die but took action to save himself by climbing out. The Chinese seek always to justify their deeds by reference to the sages and this moral argument carried great weight with Shih-min.

He made one more appeal to the emperor, submitting a memorial which set out in detail his brothers' conspiracy; but the emperor, as usual, procrastinated. So, at last, Shih-min acted. With picked men he lay in ambush awaiting his brothers as they came to the early morning audience. When the younger brother caught sight of Shih-min he shot three arrows at him, but all missed. Shih-min then took the famous bow that had served his family so well, and with his first arrow slew his elder brother. The younger brother, wounded by another arrow, fell from his horse and, trying to escape on foot, was killed.

When the emperor was told, he said pathetically, "I did not expect to see this day," and added, with his usual lack of resolution, "What must I do now?" Within a few hours he signed a

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decree approving Shih-min's action. Then he sent for his son and, greeting him with affection, said, "This day has come to clear up all my doubts." Perhaps he remembered the words he spoke when Shih-min persuaded him to become a rebel nine years earlier, "If our family is ruined it will be all your fault; but if we mount to the throne it will be equally thanks to you."

Shih-min, now all-powerful, did not seek revenge on his brothers' friends. He urged the emperor to grant a general amnesty and even took into his own service one of the most notable offenders. But there was a striking exception to the amnesty. Each of the slain princes had five sons, and these ten children, grandsons of the emperor and nephews of Shih-min, were all put to death. No one thought this cruel or unnatural; partly because it was common law in China for the whole family to share the punishment of an individual wrong-doer; and partly because in those days, in Europe as well as in China, it was considered unwise to leave any child living who might later become a pretender to the throne.

Before long the emperor, wearied by irresolution, was glad to hand over the crown to the son who had won it for him, and, in the year 626, when Li Shih-min was twenty-six years old, his father abdicated and he became the second T'ang emperor.

The family troubles at the Chinese court encouraged the Tartars and one of their most formidable leaders invaded China, with an army of one hundred thousand horsemen. Shih-min's ministers advised him to remain in the capital, but he said, "I know them of old, you do not. They think that I, being newly seated on the throne, will be unable to oppose them. If I show fear they will plunder the countryside, but if I ride out alone as though despising them, they will be afraid. You stay here and watch." He then rode to the Tartar camp with a party of only six officers and demanded a parley. The Tartars were glad to make peace with so bold an emperor and a treaty was solemnised, after the Tartar custom, by the sacrifice of a white horse.

Next year famine swept the Tartar lands, and the Chinese ministers urged Shih-min to attack the ancient enemy while they were weakened by this catastrophe. He replied, "To break an oath is treachery, to profit by the distress of others is unrighteous, to triumph over the weakness of an enemy is un-

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chivalrous. Only after they have done me an injury shall I be free to make war on them."

A few years later the Tartars broke the treaty and, in a short war, Shih-min defeated them utterly, capturing three important prisoners: the wife of the "mad" Yang Ti with her son, who had been sheltering in Tartar territory; and the Tartar chief who broke the treaty. The T'ang Dynasty was now so securely on the Dragon Throne that Shih-min could afford to give the old empress and her son their liberty; the Tartars were so thoroughly beaten that he spared the life of their chief, giving him a job in the imperial stables!

Soon after Shih-min ascended the throne he suffered from nightmares; caused, it was said, by evil spirits who banged on the door of the imperial bedchamber. The empress was so concerned that she called a council of ministers and generals to discuss what should be done. Two generals volunteered to stand guard, fully armed, outside the emperor's door all night. The evil spirits did not dare to approach these intrepid generals and so the emperor's nightmares ceased. But Shih-min, always considerate for his subjects, could not bear to think of the generals going without sleep night after night. He ordered their portraits, painted on panels of peachwood, to be hung on the outside of the door. The spirits, supposing these pictures to be the living warriors, were still afraid to approach; but, after a time, they found a way round to the back door and renewed their noisy attacks. The empress then had another portrait, this time of one of the ministers, hung on the back door, and the evil spirits were finally frustrated. This remarkable way of dealing with devils was soon copied by ordinary people, and, to this very day, throughout China, pictures of Shih-min's two generals and his minister are sometimes stuck upon doors as a protection against evil spirits.

Apart from Shih-min's trouble with nightmares, he was singularly free from superstition. The court astrologers, who dabbled in magic, once declared the "lucky" time for a certain ceremony to be during a month when farm work was urgent. Shih-min insisted on postponing the ceremony till a time more convenient to his subjects, saying, "Fortune and calamity are not dependent upon lucky days but upon the good or bad conduct of men themselves." He refused to practise even a mild deceit upon

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his ministers. It was suggested he might learn which members of his council were flatterers by proposing, deliberately, something foolish, that only flatterers would support. "I admit," he said, "this plan would succeed; but if a sovereign uses such deceits how can he expect his ministers to be honest and candid with him?"

The empress, an exceptional woman, took no direct part in politics but did much to influence Shih-min. Once, when a minister exasperated the emperor by opposing him strongly at a council meeting, he said to his wife, "I shall never be master while that wretch is alive, he contradicts me before the whole court!" She left the room and returned wearing robes of ceremony. "I have heard," she said, "that an enlightened emperor finds a faithful minister who is upright and sincere. You have just admitted that you have such an one. I have robed myself in honour of the fact, to congratulate you."

At the age of thirty-six, Shih-min could look back with great satisfaction over the nineteen years since he urged his father to rebel. By foresight, wise counsel and superb generalship he had established a dynasty; his country was united more firmly than ever before; the enemies of China had been subdued and his administration was well organised and founded on justice. His rule was popular and his ministers faithful. Except for the wretched quarrel with his brothers, Shih-min had little to regret. But that quarrel, ended bloodily and irrevocably, was to be repeated in a slightly different pattern by his own sons.

Shih-min had every reason to expect his glorious reign would continue for many years, but, without warning, his days darkened. The early death of his wife brought him inconsolable grief; the behaviour of his sons brought him shame and bitterness.

The son Shih-min appointed Heir Apparent proved to be strangely unbalanced. He cared little for the polite civilisation of China but took an extraordinary delight in imitating the nomad life of the Tartars. He would not listen to his tutors, but surrounded himself with Tartar servants, and from them learned wild dances and half-savage customs. He boasted that when he became emperor he would put to death anyone who remonstrated with him, and that when he had executed a few hundreds "the rest will keep silence". It was, indeed, ironical that Shih-min, who tamed the Tartars, should be cursed with a son who spent his



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time in childish imitation of their barbarous ways. To the civilised Chinese the Heir Apparent's habits were particularly offensive.

With the Heir Apparent behaving so badly, it was natural that one of his brothers, who was ambitious, should think himself a more suitable person to become the next Son of Heaven, and between these two arose envy and jealousy. A general, with some supposed grievance against the emperor, persuaded the Heir Apparent to attempt the assassination of his father. He pointed out that if Shih-min could be murdered, the young man would have the double satisfaction of becoming emperor at once and revenging himself on his too-ambitious brother.

Very likely the plot would have succeeded had it not been disclosed by chance. A third son of Shih-min, having quarrelled violently with his tutor, murdered him, at the same time killing an important official. Realising the serious consequences likely to follow this crime, the foolish lad collected a few malcontents and declared an open revolt. Shih-min was obliged to send troops to put down this trivial rising and, when the affair was being investigated, one of the malcontents, who knew all about the Heir Apparent's plot to assassinate the emperor, told the story to save his skin.

It was impossible for Shih-min to overlook the criminal intentions of the Heir Apparent. He was exiled and soon died. His place was given to a fourth son, then sixteen years old, but the too-ambitious son, disappointed by this decision, was determined to get the succession for himself. Shih-min found him plotting to that intent and he, too, had to be exiled. He died in disgrace two years later.

Thus, for the second time in his life, Shih-min suffered a family tragedy; and he may have wondered if the terrible revenge he took on his brothers was the seed of this bitter fruit in his sons.

These private sorrows left wounds that would not heal. Shih-min, brought up to the active life of a soldier in the saddle, had yet been a wise ruler in peaceful years; now, in his grief, he turned again to the distractions of war. The ruler of the kingdom of Korea had taken aggressive action against a small state that was vassal to China. Disregarding the advice of his ministers, Shih-min led a large army against Korea. Success in one battle

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partly restored his self-confidence after the disgrace of his sons' misconduct. On the despatch announcing the victory he wrote, "When I am at the head of the army, what else should we expect?" But one victory does not always win a war and Shih-min's last campaign was only a partial success. He suffered from the rigours of camp life and, as his health grew worse, went to his favourite home, the Kingfisher-Blue Palace in the Nan Shan or southern mountains. There he died in the year 649, before he was fifty.

Li Shih-min was more than a brilliant general; he was an emperor with imagination. His rule saw the beginning of a great period of peace, which lasted nearly a hundred and thirty years. During this long peace China achieved, perhaps, her greatest glory in art and culture. The Chinese looked upon Li Shih-min as a model of what a "Confucian Prince" should be; a Son of Heaven who did not attempt to enrich himself, nor live in luxury, but thought always of the well-being of his subjects.

By the standards of his time, Li Shih-min was a man of unusual compassion. Once, when his soldiers captured a foreign town and made slaves of the inhabitants, he was touched by the misery of these unfortunate folk and ransomed them with his own money; and they, amazed by such mercy, lined the route along which the imperial chariot passed and cheered their deliverer.

For hundreds of years it had been usual for Court Historians to write the history of their own time for the benefit of posterity. Shih-min, curious to know what was being written about his reign, asked the President of the Board of History to let him see the records. The minister replied:

"The Historians of our department record your majesty's actions, whether good or bad; your words, whether praiseworthy or reprehensible, and everything meritorious or unworthy which happens in the government. They are exact in these matters, as is essential to history . . . but I have never heard that any emperor hitherto has read what was written of him."

"Why!" said Shih-min, "would you write anything discreditable about me?"

"Being entrusted with the writing of history, how could I

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avoid doing so?" answered the minister; and one of his assistants added, "Even if the President of the Board of History were unwilling to do so, it would be our duty, as his assistants, to record the facts."

Perhaps Li Shih-min was a little piqued, for he said:

"I have attempted to follow the wise conduct of the sage emperors; with the help of good ministers I have restored the laws which had perished, and have revived the power of the government; I have not listened to flatterers, who are the main cause of the bad conduct and misgovernment of princes. If I can continue in this way to my death, what evil can be recorded against me?"

The President of the Board of History answered, "Even the words which Your Majesty has just spoken will infallibly be recorded in the annals of the Empire."

## TU FU

### THE POET

(A.D. 712-770)

DURING many centuries of Chinese history it was the ambition of every schoolboy to become a scholar-official; to be a go-between, interpreting the will of the Son of Heaven to his subjects and keeping the ruler informed as to the needs of the people.

Tu Fu, who came of a family that could boast eleven generations of scholars, gave early promise of ability. At the age of six he made up songs about fabulous creatures; when he was eight his pen-brush drew large characters that his elders admired for their beauty. While still a boy he was "tied in a knot of friendship with the old and hoary-headed", and at fourteen he began to travel, visiting places famed in early history.

At the age of twenty-four, Tu Fu was an experienced young man, a little spoilt by the good opinions of his scholar friends and quite aware of his own cleverness. The time had come for him to take his place as an official and he went to the capital, Ch'ang An, confident that he would gain a high place in the civil service examination; and, thereafter, shine as one of the most brilliant officials of the wise and frugal emperor, Ming Huang.

It was a time of peace, prosperity and tranquil government; with the poor comparatively content, the nobles obedient to the emperor and with scholars leading the most cultured society the world has ever known. But, to the young, nothing is quite perfect and Tu Fu boasted of the way he would help the emperor to make things even better. In a poem he wrote, "I shall transport my Lord the Emperor to the height of the ideal rulers, Yao and Shun".\*

Alas! when the examination results were known, Tu Fu had failed. "I came down," he wrote, "from the ranks of those who received rewards of merit at the examinations—solitary, rejected."

\* The translations of Tu Fu's poems are from *Tu Fu and Travels of a Chinese Poet* by Mrs. Florence Ayscough (Jonathan Cape). Mrs. Ayscough translated very literally, word for word and, sometimes every part of a word—which, perhaps, adds to their attraction for Western readers.

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It is not easy to realise what this failure meant to the young man. It closed the door to employment in the civil service, almost the only career in which he could earn an honest living; it hurt his pride and, moreover, the pride of his family; but, far worse, it was a barrier to his idealism. For Tu Fu and the great majority of young scholars, official life was the natural opportunity to give of their best in the service of mankind.

This bitter disappointment turned Tu Fu into a traveller again. What else could he do? "I simulated eccentricity, madness," he said, "in spring wrote poems . . . in winter hunted," and in one poem he made the confession, "Gave way to carousal in provinces of Ch'i and Chao." Elsewhere Tu Fu mentioned that when he was only fourteen, "I already appreciated spirits made from fermented grain."

According to *The Book of History*, compiled by Confucius, alcoholic drinks were invented about the year 2,200 B.C. by a man named I-teih. "The Emperor tasted them and found them pleasant, wherefore he banished I-teih to a safe distance and prohibited the use of intoxicating liquor, saying 'In later times the use of wine will be the ruin of my country.'" Possibly this story was invented by someone disgusted at the gross intemperance of a later court, for there was a time when drunkenness was counted a virtue. One empress even had an artificial lake filled with wine, and amused herself watching courtiers on their knees at the lake-side, lapping the liquor like beasts, till they were drunk.

Confucius did not denounce the use of wine, but he did say, "He who seeks only coarse food to eat, water to drink and a bent arm for pillow will, without looking for it, find happiness." Some seven or eight hundred years later, orthodox Confucianists, overlooking the imaginative insight of the sage, polished and repolished his formalism till it became stereotyped. As a reaction from this, a little group of poets, calling themselves the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, went out of their way to break conventions and became widely known for their excessive drinking.

Tu Fu, notwithstanding his examination failure, knew his poetry to be good, and when he went carousing through the provinces of Ch'i and Chao, may have felt he was living up to the vagabond ways of the Seven Sages. His poems contain many

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references to drinking parties, and he mentioned that the hill path leading to his village was dangerous, but that as he was always a little drunk when he went home he had no anxieties! Certainly he drank too much all through his life and, in so doing, undermined his health.

For nine years after the examination failure, Tu Fu wandered about the country, sometimes in the company of the famous poet Li Po, with whom he had a lifelong friendship. "We have climbed everywhere, to every pool and ledge," he wrote. During this time he married; though the records make no direct reference to this, since the Chinese consider a man's marriage such a normal event as to need no comment. The poems written during his wanderings disclose, sometimes, a sense of frustration at not being considered worthy to serve the emperor and, as the poet had no regular income, he often mentions the hardships of poverty.

When he was thirty-three there came a gleam of hope. He was invited to the capital to compose an inscription for the grave of one of the Imperial Concubines; but the hope soon faded as this little commission led to no official appointment.

While at the capital, Tu Fu met a nephew of the emperor, with whom he had something in common. This prince, nicknamed "Prince Ferment, President of the Board of Barm" ("barm" being the froth on the top of fermented liquors), went about with Tu Fu from wineshop to wineshop, "dragging each other by our robes". Prince Ferment was the leader of eight famous men who called themselves the Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup, a title reminiscent of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. Tu Fu described one of them as drinking "like a long whale, sucking in the seven streams", and he reported that his friend Li Po, who was one of the self-styled immortals, "sleeps in a wineshop in the market place".

How long Tu Fu would have been satisfied with this dissolute life we cannot tell, for, rather unexpectedly, another chance to enter official service came his way. The emperor ordered a re-examination of scholars who had failed and who might now be suitable for employment. The minister deputed to take charge of this examination was known, ironically, as the Old Man of Heaven, because he had climbed high in the service by bribery.

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It is said he deliberately failed Tu Fu and other good scholars, fearing they would outshine him. Certainly the Old Man of Heaven was held in contempt; and even to-day, twelve hundred years after his time, Chinese scholars repeat with scorn a stupid slip he made in an official composition.

Despair at this second failure drove Tu Fu from the capital and he sought consolation in further travel. He ascended a famous pagoda, three hundred feet in height: "We step over the threshold of the vast azure sky," he wrote, and "there is no moment when the tearing wind desists". His bitter disappointment is blown away:

*I am no master of contented thought  
But climbing here transforms a hundred sorrows.*

Poverty and ill health were constant worries, though the poet met these common troubles with half-humorous exasperation: "For three autumn months the tiger of malaria has pursued me; who can endure it?" he cried. A friend gave very practical help:

He did not scorn my poverty-stricken obscurity. He plainly saw that I was cold and half famished, nor was I concerned to hide my need . . . he ordered fine, delicate foods . . . most excellent, freshly-killed meat . . . and bought secretly a measure of wine.

Tu Fu's troubles did not diminish his interest in public affairs. The emperor was allowing the government to fall into the hands of corrupt officials and the poet was disturbed by rumours of great extravagance in the palace. In one poem he half reproaches the Son of Heaven for not making enough use of "talented scholars", who are becoming "anxious and apprehensive". He was confident he could do better than some of the emperor's advisers and, doubtless, thought of himself when he wrote of scholars "rejected, discarded, they endure the life of wanderers who lodge in inns". He protested, too, against a war which he said was aggressive:

*Lord, already possesses sufficient districts, territories,  
Why open innumerable new frontiers?*

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When Tu Fu was forty, the emperor announced three solemn rites; one to honour Lao Tzu, one for the ancestors of the T'ang Dynasty and one to worship Heaven and Earth. Tu Fu wrote poems for these rites and his friend Prince Ferment presented them to his uncle. The emperor was delighted and, at once, summoned the poet to join a select company of scholars and nobles at court, who formed a kind of reserve, awaiting further examination or orders. The part of the palace where these men lived was called, very appropriately, the Garden where the Talented are Perched.

Tu Fu was elated, "Myself I marvelled that in one day fame could blaze a red-hot fire." Perhaps he was too easily elated, but it was another chance to serve the Son of Heaven and, at least, it took him from poverty and neglect to dwell amongst intellectuals and noblemen, "who use fine chariots and wear fine clothes".

For several months the poet made the most of this congenial society and the comforts of court life. Then came a literary examination conducted, as before, by the ill-reputed Old Man of Heaven; and, as before, Tu Fu was "sent down". He had to come off his perch in the Garden of the Talented and return to obscurity, with the endless struggle to "make the two ends of nothing meet". He wrote, "I withdrew my person, drank deeply, hiding honour and virtue."

The reign of the Emperor Ming Huang had been one of the most glorious in Chinese history, but now the Son of Heaven showed fatal weakness. He was fast losing control of the government and himself. When he was over sixty he became infatuated with a beautiful concubine, Yang Kuei-fei; and, as the years passed, this woman not only stole the time he should have given to public business, but fitted members of her own family into the key positions at court. She quarrelled with Tu Fu's friend Li Po and had him banished; she organised frivolities on a vast scale, and by getting rid of honest officials managed to hide from the emperor all reports of trouble in the country. Tu Fu heard rumours of the distressing state of court affairs and was deeply grieved.

The poet now had several children, and these extra "mouths", as the Chinese say, increased his poverty. His home was a hovel in a poor quarter of the town but his friends—poets, artists and



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scholars—came to see him. When one such visitor “strolls across to visit me”, Tu Fu had to call over the garden wall to neighbours, “simple, honest people”, to borrow wine, which proved to be, “thick and unstrained, with heavy sediment”, and, as the visitor stayed a long time, “I rise and consider how to obtain more wine for my Lord”.

The Old Man of Heaven died and, perhaps, the removal of that opposition accounts for the fact that Tu Fu was appointed, as it were “out of the blue”, to the Household of the Heir Apparent. It was a humble post, but at last Tu Fu, at the age of forty-three, was an official. “I sing mad songs, commissioned by a perfectly enlightened dynasty,” he cried joyfully. This unlooked-for appointment rescued him from poverty and gave promise of promotion to something more important. Tu Fu thought it would enable him, “to stroll about at leisure”, and added, “I enjoy wine, therefore a trifling emolument is a necessity.”

But, however desirable the pay, the work proved to be more irksome than the poet’s undisciplined nature could stand:

*Men of the wilds are large-minded, natural, not servile or self-conscious;  
How can they remain long among princes and noblemen?*

After a few months, Tu Fu resigned, and was soon in desperate want. A famine, caused by floods, sent up the price of food till it was beyond the purse of an unemployed scholar. One of his small sons died of starvation; and the distracted father wrote a poem that is now considered one of the best from his brush. The poet began by describing himself as “a cotton-clad man”, meaning that he lived amongst the poor and could not afford the silk robe expected of a scholar. “Old age has but increased my stupid idealism,” he declared. “Roused by injustice, I pour out songs the more passionately.” He could not forget the extravagance he had seen at court, where the emperor kept four hundred performing horses and required five hundred soldiers to look after his fighting cocks; and where his favourite concubine, Yang Kuei-fei, had seven hundred women to manage her wardrobe. The poem contrasts this luxury within the vermilion gates of the palace with the misery of the common people.

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*Wine and meat are stale within the Vermilion Gates;  
Bones of those who freeze and starve lie on the road.*

Perhaps Tu Fu realised that the sufferings of his own little family were aggravated by his extravagant wine-drinking habits:

*There is shame in my heart at being the father of a son  
Who was snapped off in tender childhood because he had no food.*

And he was very near despair when he wrote, "I can endure disappointment, endure to become dust, even dust that no longer moves."

Then came national disaster; disaster that erased all private grief. Yang Kuei-fei had patronised an ugly fat man of Tartar origin, who became a general in the Chinese army. For some years this man lived at court as the concubine's adopted son and, though his loyalty was called in question, the foolish old emperor was persuaded by Yang Kuei-fei to appoint him Commander-in-Chief of the best troops in the empire. Suddenly he turned rebel and led an army to attack the capital. The panic-stricken emperor, accompanied by Yang Kuei-fei and a few loyal troops, abandoned the palace and fled westwards.

The loyal soldiers, realising that the disaster had been brought about by the follies of Yang Kuei-fei, demanded her life. "We are not afraid to die," they said, "we will fight the rebels, but we must first kill this hated woman." The emperor did not dare refuse and gave the order for her execution. So the famous beauty was led to a village pagoda and there, before the image of the merciful Buddha, was strangled with a length of silk.

When the soldiers saw that Yang Kuei-fei was dead, they took up their arms and turned to fight the rebels; but the broken-hearted emperor cried, "I have nothing to live for now, but to dream of her night and day and to pray that I may soon join her in the other world."

News of the rebellion came to Tu Fu as a call for immediate action. He must find a place of safety for his family and then hurry to the side of the emperor; to serve, to fight, to do anything he could in the national emergency. He set out on foot with his wife, their two sons, named Brave Bear and Thoroughbred Horse,

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two or three little girls and a baby. Heavy rains soaked their clothes and at night they were half frozen. Their feet became sore from struggling up and down slippery paths. Their only food was wild fruits, and one of the little girls became so hungry that she gnawed her father's arm as he carried her. Brave Bear "understood the situation better", and with fortitude "sought bitter plums to eat".

Meanwhile the rebels looted the capital, destroyed the Ancestor Tablets of the royal family and massacred the thousands of women left behind in the palace. Ming Huang abdicated in favour of the Heir Apparent, in whose household Tu Fu had served.

As soon as the poet's family were safe, he set out, alone, to join his former master, the new emperor:

*For the sake of my country I exert bone and sinew;  
My person proceeds by stealth, a rat from its hole.*

Rebel troops were scouring the countryside and although Tu Fu proceeded by stealth, he was, unluckily, captured, and sent to the capital—a prisoner of war.

The rebellion dragged on for ten years, though Yang Kuei-fei's adopted son, who began it, soon met a violent end. One night, while he slept, he was murdered by his own son. The official history records this event briefly but with gruesome detail: "The son, using a great knife, hewed his father's belly; his bowels gushed out upon the bed; he died. The affair was notorious."

Many officials of high rank were forced to serve the rebels, others committed suicide or disabled themselves rather than do so. Tu Fu was considered so unimportant that, at first, he was allowed to wander about the city without restraint. He became friendly with a Buddhist priest and when, later, the rebel leaders decided to make use of him, he hid in a temple.

After six months' captivity the poet escaped and, with difficulty, found his way to the temporary court of the emperor. He arrived worn out with travel, half starved and his garments in ill-repair. "Both elbows are through the sleeves of my coat," he records.

The emperor was deeply touched by Tu Fu's loyalty and, at

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once, made him a Censor. Here, indeed, was high honour and great opportunity. Many able and loyal scholars after serving years at court, with promotion from one post to another, never reached the dignity of a Censor. Indeed it might be said that no higher post was possible, for the Censorate in China was unique. The Censors were present at the inner councils of ministers and had power to criticise the way in which other officials performed or neglected their duties. What was more, they were expected to censure the Son of Heaven himself, if he acted unwisely, unjustly or without the decorum expected of his high office.

An emperor had absolute power over his subjects including his ministers, so that the outspoken duty of a Censor might be dangerous. To rebuke an autocrat, face to face and in the presence of his ministers, required great courage, but there have been many instances in Chinese history when a Censor has done so; sometimes suffering immediate execution for his temerity, but more often influencing the ruler to amend his ways. This extraordinary office in the Chinese system of government was the more remarkable because the person of the Son of Heaven was respected with impressive ceremony. When Tu Fu appeared at an audience he had to kneel before the Dragon, raise both hands above his head and bow his body till his forehead struck the ground. His advice or criticism had to be expressed with extravagant humility and the emperor must never be named, but referred to by some such phrase as "the Above One".

Almost at once Tu Fu had to face a difficult situation. One of his old friends, a general in the army, suffered a severe defeat in which forty thousand troops were slain. The general hurried to the court and, with his back bared like a condemned criminal, knelt before the emperor to confess that his disgrace merited death. Thereupon Tu Fu, claiming his rights as a Censor, intervened and urged the emperor to remember the general's previous services and loyalty. "I, the Censor, expressed my humble criticism to the One who wore the Dragon Robe." Apparently Tu Fu was not very tactful and "the Above One felt rage". The general was spared, but the emperor was so annoyed that he ordered a court of enquiry to consider Tu Fu's conduct. Fortunately he relented, "the Enlightened One treated me mercifully and forgave".

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Perhaps the emperor was not altogether sorry when his over-zealous Censor asked for leave to visit his family. Tu Fu had not seen them since he was taken prisoner.

*Wife, children, marvel that I am alive:  
First startled, then comforted, yet again  
they dry their tears.*

They were living in poverty, but Tu Fu noticed that his little daughters already imitated their mother in the way they combed their hair, used "the early morning make-up", vermilion and white lead powder, and "in wild confusion draw themselves broad eyebrows".

By the time the Censor was ready to resume his duties, the court had returned to the recaptured capital. His poems become full of interesting observations of court life and current affairs, so that it has been said "the history of the state may be read in the poems of Tu Fu". Very soon the Censor was in trouble again by his too frequent admonitions. His advice was ignored and he sought to drown his disappointment in flagons of wine:

*Daily, daily, as I retire from dawn audience,  
I pawn my Spring clothes,  
And return from the riverhead drunk, each and  
every day.  
As a rule wine debts stand wherever I go.*

It is not altogether surprising that Tu Fu was dismissed from his high office and given the minor post of an under-secretary, in a place sixty miles from the capital. He could no longer "stroll about at leisure", and hated the new job:

*The restraint of my girdle drives me mad, I  
could give a great howl;  
Why should the under-secretary be thus hustled!*

Happy-go-lucky ways will not do for a junior official in a small provincial town:

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*There is no giving way to an absent-minded mood,  
I must talk and greet companions with a smile;  
There are times when I put on my clothes upside-down,  
inner garments where outer garments should be.*

After the post of Censor, and after Tu Fu's early dream of guiding the emperor into the ways of Yao and Shun, this was, indeed, a set-back. When a serious drought threatened the food supply of the province the under-secretary resigned from official life, without much regret.

At the age of forty-seven, Tu Fu rode off on a horse; his wife and children jolting behind in a springless cart with iron-rimmed wheels, such as may be seen in common use in north China to this day. For months they wandered seeking a place where food was less scarce:

*I, a famished man, with monkey's wit,  
How should I find a peaceful home?*

The little family party travelled two hundred miles to the west and then, turning south, covered another two hundred miles before reaching the difficult Two-edged Sword Mountains. The hardships of the journey caused them great suffering so that Tu Fu wrote, "My little boys seem staggering old men." Another two hundred miles southwards brought them to the remote city of Chêngtu and, at last, the peaceful home was reached. Government officials, respecting Tu Fu as an ex-Censor, made him a free grant of land beside the Washed Flowers Stream, and there, he built what he called the Grass Hut.

From a conversation the poet had with a nephew, whom he met during the long journey, and from the absence of reference to wine in many of the poems written at this time, it seems possible that Tu Fu made an effort to break his drinking habits. Certainly he showed great tenderness towards his children and seemed more conscious of their dependence on him.

At first he was delighted with his new home. "Have become a farmer," he wrote; and added details of his vegetable garden and of the many fruit trees he planted. He arranged stones to protect the river bank; he felled trees to disclose a view of distant mountains and he worked hard in his field with a hoe. Another poem

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describes how his wife made a chessboard and how Brave Bear and Thoroughbred Horse bent needles into fish-hooks.

Then the novelty of this farm life wore thin, mention of wine comes back into the poems and Tu Fu confessed, "these ten days past have been out to drink; my bed deserted, empty". Life in the Grass Hut was too secluded, the struggle with poverty too long; and the poet became dejected; "for a whole month have not combed my hair".

News of a great victory over the rebels stirred the old ambition and Tu Fu talked of returning to the capital; but when, rather surprisingly, the emperor offered him an appointment, he refused. He was "a guest of rivers and lakes", and could not settle down. The Grass Hut was abandoned and the family moved eastwards in easy stages, towards central China.

Then came a letter from an old friend who had been made a duke and appointed to Chêngtu. The duke invited Tu Fu to act as his councillor and the emperor confirmed the appointment.

Thus the poet, at the age of fifty-three, became an official for the third time and, assuming the dark green robe of his rank, returned to live at the Grass Hut. Once again he was disappointed, finding his advice ignored; but this time resentment got the better of him when his judgment was muddled with wine. In a drunken moment he went to the duke's residence and, bursting into the great man's bedroom, climbed on to the bed and pulled his beard! This affront was too much for the duke, who decided to kill his violent councillor. Fortunately, the duke's mother, being warned of her son's intention, persuaded him to allow Tu Fu and his family to leave the district.

Chêngtu is on a tributary of the Yangtse-kiang, and the banished Tu family went by boat down to Sinfu and so joined the main stream of the great river, which flows thence seventeen hundred miles through the centre of China to the sea. After travelling some days by barge they stopped to visit a relative and, while ashore, Tu Fu saw a boat sweep by, draped in white curtains. White is a sign of mourning in China and the poet learned that this vessel was the funeral cortège of the duke whose beard he had pulled so recently. The great man was dead and his body was being taken for burial in his native town—a custom to which the Chinese attach considerable importance.

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For some time Tu Fu had been in poor health and now his travels were interrupted by a serious illness which proved to be consumption. The family settled at a town a few miles above the famous Yangtse Gorges and remained there for three years. The poems of this period give a vivid description of the busy traffic on the river, the countryside and the customs of the people. In addition to his lung trouble Tu Fu developed diabetes, but in spite of ill health he seemed happier and more content.

He wrote a poem of one thousand characters, one of the longest in the Chinese language, in which he showed a growing interest in Buddhism. He talked of making a pilgrimage to distant shrines and even contemplated retiring to a monastery to study the scriptures of Buddhism. He no longer had any desire for official life, though he urged his scholar friends to devote their talents to the service of the emperor.

When Tu Fu was better in health, the family moved another stage down the river, passing through the Gorges:

*Little boat tosses sideways, whirling eddies boil;  
Little boat heels over, surging billows swirl . . .  
Books of poems, histories, all are overturned, scattered;  
Travelling bags, packs, half are crushed, drenched.  
On precipice of life I look down giddy, anxious;  
A place of death we may reach at any instant.*

Even to-day the Yangtse Gorges claim many lives, but Tu Fu's little boat shot the many miles of rapids successfully. For a year or two the family wandered from place to place, never going far from the river. Then Tu Fu decided to live permanently in a boat:

*For the remains of my life I will tarry by rivers and streams  
Living familiar, among wood-cutters, fisher-folk.*

But very little life remained to the poet. Bad weather and floods forced him ashore and for several days he was marooned in a village temple without food. He was rescued by the local magistrate and, according to a legend, ate so much "ox-meat" and drank so much "white wine" that he died.



### *The Strain of Harmony*

It is clear from his poems, however, that this legend is untrue, though he certainly suffered from long exposure:

*Activity ends, yet I am not heavy-hearted:  
Sadness comes; am suddenly aware I no longer resist.*

*Eccentric my course; the end where will it be?  
Slight my talents; am thankful for Royal favours once received.*

Tu Fu died in the year 770, aged fifty-eight. The body that fared so ill—from malaria, consumption, diabetes, malnutrition and too much drink—was put in a coffin aboard a boat and went on floating down the river, until it floated out of history: for no one knows where they put ashore the mortal remains of the greatest Chinese poet.

From boyhood till very near the end of his life, Tu Fu wanted to serve as an official, never realising what a very poor official he made. He was diligent in writing poetry, leaving us no fewer than twenty volumes, but his idea of a civil service job was “to stroll about at leisure”. He could not endure restraint, was tactless and impossible to work with, while all his life he too much “feared the grief of an empty flagon”.

Men often struggle, as did Tu Fu, trying to achieve a way of life for which they are quite unsuited. Men of genius often undervalue that part of their work which is beyond the need of praise. Tu Fu knew his poetry was excellent but he never guessed how long it would outlast his frail body; floating on down the river of Time, bringing joy and inspiration to millions of readers. He never knew his service to mankind was greater than any he could render the Son of Heaven.

# HAN YÜ

STATESMAN, SCHOLAR AND POET

(A.D. 768-824)

VISITORS to Ch'ang An approached the famous city, usually, by way of the Pa Waters Bridge, across the Zigzag River; and it was a matter of common courtesy for citizens to accompany their parting guests thus far on the homeward journey. Ten thousand willow trees had been planted along the river banks, and friends who came to the bridge to say farewell exchanged little branches of willow, for good luck.

One day, towards the end of the eighth century, there was more than the ordinary bustle about the Pa Waters Bridge, for scholars were arriving in large numbers, from provincial towns and villages all over the empire. They came to compete in the official examinations, held in the capital periodically.

Most of the scholars were young men, but there was no age limit for candidates. Some were well past their youth and a few quite elderly. Indeed, so great was the distinction of scholarship that men who had failed again and again returned to try once more.

One young man, named Han Yü, was accompanied by his tutor; for it was no small thing to a country schoolmaster to have a pupil clever enough to compete for the *Hsiu Ts'ai* degree, and even a schoolmaster likes to show off his wares. True, the *Hsiu Ts'ai*, which means "flowering talent" or "budding genius", was the lowest of the four degrees, corresponding, very roughly, with the Bachelor of Arts degree of a modern university. Graduates could not expect a civil service appointment by virtue of this degree; but it was, nevertheless, the bottom rung on the ladder to fame.

The country-bred Han Yü was excited by this first sight of the capital; and his master, who had been to Ch'ang An once before, was eager to show his favourite pupil how familiar he was with all the notable sights. "See," he cried, pointing over the tree-tops to the Imperial Park, "there in the distance is the roof of the Great

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Brilliant Palace, built one hundred and fifty years ago by the Emperor Li Shih-min. Some day, my son, you will be summoned there to compete in the most difficult of all examinations; for membership of the Imperial Academy. That will make your old master a proud man!"

Han Yü grinned, for he was ambitious and felt pleased to hear his teacher talk as though such a distinction were really possible; but he guessed it could be only a joke.

As master and pupil made their way on foot across Joy of Travellers Plain, towards the city, they overtook a young man wearing the blue robe of the *Hsin Ts'ai*. Han Yü's teacher nudged him and whispered: "At home a 'budding genius' is rare enough to be honoured by everyone, but here in the capital you will see many a blue gown. In the Examination Hall you will do me credit and very soon you, too, will be wearing such a gown. After that you must renew your studies with even greater diligence, till you become a *Chü Jên*."

The *Chü Jên* degree, which means literally "promoted man", often led to a junior appointment in the civil service. Those who held this degree wore a dark blue silk robe. A still more difficult examination was for the *Chin Shih*, which means "an advanced scholar". A *Chin Shih* wore a robe of violet-coloured silk and was entitled to display, above the door of his home, a red board with characters in gilt proclaiming his scholarship.\*

When the travellers reached the city and turned into the narrow lanes abutting on the wide Street of Heaven, Han Yü was fascinated. The folk thronging the narrow streets were truly an astonishing sight. There were noblemen with attendants to clear the way before them; officials full of importance, with buttons in their hats to show their official rank; soldiers with halberds of the Imperial Guard; wealthy men in brightly painted chairs carried by uniformed bearers; and not a few Buddhist monks in drab robes, their shaven heads giving them somehow a strangely lifeless look amid so much that was lively. There was a troop of jugglers, such as Han Yü saw at home only on festival days; street players

\* China's famous Examination System was established firmly one hundred and fifty years before Han Yü's time but it was not until A.D. 1066 that examinations were held triennially and A.D. 1370 before the *Hsin Ts'ai*, *Chü Jên* and *Chin Shih* degrees were made a regular feature. Thereafter the system was almost unchanged until its abolition in A.D. 1905.

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enacting a popular drama; and, best of all, a magnificent funeral in which dozens of men carried gay banners and bright silk umbrellas, while an incredibly noisy band played flutes and gongs to ensure that the spirit of the departed did not arrive in the next world unheralded.

Han Yü would have been glad to stand and stare all day, and for many days; but there was the examination to be faced. His future depended on success, for he came of a poor family. Both his parents died when he was a baby and, in accordance with the well-understood obligations of family life, he had been cared for by a brother who was many years his senior and, when that brother died, by his sister-in-law. She, indeed, had been a mother to Han Yü, teaching him all she could and encouraging him to love his lessons. She managed to send him to school and was as proud of his cleverness as was the old schoolmaster.

During the T'ang Dynasty, and, for that matter, during the greater part of Chinese history, distinctions of class were not based on wealth, as has been usual in western countries, but on occupation. The most respected class was always the scholars; next came the farm workers, for China is essentially an agricultural country; then came common labourers. Inferior to all these in the social scale were traders, bankers and business men; while actors, barbers and soldiers were beyond the pale.

So the natural ambition of Han Yü's sister-in-law was to make her young brother a scholar. If he could pass the difficult examinations he would bring honour to the Han family, and might even become one of the distinguished men of the empire. If he failed, he must remain a poor man, probably toiling all day as a worker in the fields.

When the time came, Han Yü's teacher conducted him to the main entrance of the Examination Hall and, having repeated for the tenth time his last words of advice, commended his pupil to the God of Literature, and left him to his fate.

An attendant conducted Han Yü along a side pathway, from which narrow passages led to tiny rooms where the competitors, sitting at wooden tables on little benches, wrote their papers. There were hundreds of these rooms, each like a prison cell, and when Han Yü entered the one allotted to him, the door was shut and bolted from without. He had brought with him not only

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writing materials, but also food and a padded quilt in which to wrap himself at night, for the examination lasted twenty-four hours—during the whole of which time he was shut in.

Every student who aspired to be a "budding genius" had the same task. He did not have to answer questions on a variety of subjects, as in western examinations. He had to write two essays in the classical style. His work must contain apt allusions to events recorded in the classics and, to do this, he needed to know by heart long passages from *The Book of Changes*, the most ancient of all Chinese books consisting mainly of folk-lore; *The Book of History*, or "ancient writings"; *The Book of Songs*, consisting of three hundred and eleven poems compiled by Confucius; *The Book of Rites*, dealing with laws, regulations and ceremonies; *The Spring and Autumn Annals* and *The Analects of Confucius*; and one of the books of Mencius. In addition to the essays candidates had to write a poem; for in eighth-century China and, except for short periods, right on until the twentieth century, no man could become the governor of a province, the mayor of a town, or even a magistrate, unless he was a poet.

Han Yü passed his examinations and, in due course, qualified for a post in the civil service. There is much to be said for the Chinese sense of obligation to one's family, but sometimes officials were tempted to use their authority to get lucrative posts for their kinsmen. To prevent this, it was usual for a civil servant to be appointed to some place far from his home, and Han Yü was sent to the province of Chihli.

There, he worked well and became a model of rectitude. He was troubled to find that the poor in his district were sadly oppressed by the heavy taxes demanded by the government. Although still a young man and ambitious for promotion, Han Yü sent a memorial to the emperor asking for the taxes to be reduced. He realised that his suggestion would be very unwelcome; in fact, it so annoyed the emperor that the young official found himself appointed to a smaller and more distant place.

Notwithstanding this disgrace, Han Yü continued to serve the emperor faithfully, and to do all he could to improve the lot of the poor. He was an ardent follower of Confucius and wrote brilliant essays in praise of the ancient sages. He wrote also a good deal of

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poetry, some of which was whimsical, showing a rich sense of humour, free from malice.

When Han Yu was thirty-eight years old, a foolish emperor ascended the Dragon Throne and began at once to dabble in Taoist magic. He offered a reward to anyone who could find the elixir of life, a concoction which the Taoist priest declared would make anyone who drank it live for ever. Such superstition at court naturally encouraged the spread of popular belief in magic, and Han Yu was deeply concerned. He wrote an essay denouncing strongly "these false doctrines", and suggested that all books of magic ought to be burned. It troubled him, too, to see how the religion of Buddhism, brought from India, was spreading all over China at the expense of the wise and practical teaching of Confucius, Mencius and the other sages. He demanded that the followers of Buddha should be made to behave "like ordinary mortals" and proposed that their temples be converted into dwelling-houses. He said, "Let us keep to the methods of the ancient kings, like Yao and Shun."

Han Yu's prose writings were original and perfect in style, which commended them to many scholars. But his denunciation of the current superstitions made no impression on the emperor, and were unheeded by the officials at court.

There was a world of difference between the teaching of the best Buddhist monks and the "magic" of their rivals the Taoists; but Han Yu, in his enthusiasm for Confucianism, condemned both alike. When one of his literary friends showed some sympathy for the Buddhists, Han Yu sent him a letter of protest. His friend replied:

You object to the bald pates of the priests, their dark robes, their renunciation of family ties, their idleness and the way they live at the expense of others. So do I. But you miss the kernel while railing at the husk. . . . The majority of Buddhists love only to lead a simple life of contemplation amid the charms of hill and stream. And when I turn to gaze towards the hurryscurry of the age, in its daily race for the seals and tassels of office, I ask myself if I am to reject those, in order to take my place among the ranks of these.

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Notwithstanding his friend's arguments, Han Yü remained a firm opponent of Buddhism.

Another poet, years later, summed up the situation thus: "The Truth began to be obscured and literature to fade. Supernatural religions sprang up on all sides; and many eminent scholars failed to oppose their advance, until Han Yü, the cotton-clothed, arose and blasted them with his derision."

In many places in India, and in other parts of Asia to which the religion of Buddha had spread, there were temples and monasteries whose priests claimed to possess a relic of Buddha—a bone, a finger-nail or some other part of the body of the long-dead teacher. Indeed, if all these relics could have been brought together, there would doubtless have been enough to assemble a hundred bodies of Buddha! In A.D. 819, the Son of Heaven was told of a monastery which possessed a bone of Buddha, said to exercise magical powers that brought peculiar prosperity to the neighbourhood. The superstitious emperor ordered this relic to be removed to his court and organised a great ceremony for its reception. A special tower was built, from the summit of which he proposed to watch the procession of court dignitaries who were to receive the bone.

Han Yü was not called upon to take part in this foolish proceeding, but his conscience would not allow him to let the occasion pass without comment. A Chinese poet once spoke of "crooking the hinges of his back for five pecks of rice a day", meaning that, as an official, he was always bowing to the emperor or to some minister of state in order to keep the good favour that was his livelihood. Han Yü was not this kind of servile official. As a young man, when he took his first degree, he may have hoped to rise high in the civil service, becoming a great official; but, just as early in his career he spoilt his chances by the protest against heavy taxation, so now, when he was fifty-one years old, he risked the emperor's displeasure by writing a stinging protest against this folly of the Buddha's relic.

He pointed out that China had been well-governed and the people happy before Buddha was born. He further suggested that if the Indian saint were still living and came in person to the Chinese court, it would have been the duty of the Son of Heaven to admonish him gently for such presumption, give him

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a banquet and a suit of clothes, and then send him out of the country under military escort to be rid of him. "But what are the facts?" Han Yü demanded. "The bone of a man long since dead and decomposed, is to be admitted to the Imperial Palace! . . . Your Majesty is about to receive a disgusting object . . . Your servant implores that this bone be destroyed by fire or water."

When the emperor received this outspoken criticism of his carefully planned ceremony, he was furious. Han Yü must be executed, and that at once. Luckily there were officials at court who respected Han Yü's scholarship, and others, Confucianists at heart, who were now stirred by his words to remember their loyalty to the great Chinese sage. Tolerance is an outstanding characteristic of the Chinese people, but as often as they have been influenced by foreign beliefs and ideas, they have returned to the ancient philosophers of their own history; so there were not wanting scholars to argue the emperor out of his first fury against Han Yü. His life was spared, but he was banished to a small town on a river near the modern port of Swatow. The place had an ill repute on account of the uncivilised tribes who inhabited the district; to be their governor was to have a wretched task, more likely to bring danger than success.

It is recorded that on the way to his place of banishment, Han Yü "passed the grave of Shun, and wept over the daughters of Yao". Like many another home-sick official, he wrote a plaintive little poem recording his emotions as he travelled away from his friends and the cultured life to which he was accustomed:

*Alas! the early season flies,  
Behold the remnants of the spring!  
My boat in land-locked water lies,  
At dawn I hear the wild birds sing.*

*Then, through clouds lingering on the slope,  
The rising sun breaks on to me,  
And thrills me with a fleeting hope,—  
A prisoner longing to be free.*



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*My flowing tears are long since dried,  
Though care clings closer than it did.  
But stop! All care we lay aside  
When once they close the coffin lid.*

The last two lines of this poem show that Han Yü was thinking about the next world, and what happens to man after death. Confucius did not deny that men go to a better world, but he discouraged strongly all speculation about such matters. Confucianists tried to avoid the subject, but the spread of Buddhism and Taoism undoubtedly made it a matter of general interest. When one of Han Yü's near relatives died, he wrote a long "In Memoriam", which was read aloud at the funeral and then burned—the traditional Chinese way of sending a message to the departed:

Henceforth my grey hairs will grow white, my strength fail. Physically and mentally hurrying on to decay, how long before I shall follow thee? If there is knowledge after death, this separation will be but for a little while. If there is not knowledge after death, so will this sorrow be but for a little while, and then no more sorrow for ever."

Among Han Yü's many humorous poems is one on his teeth, which, he declares, fell out at such regular intervals that he could always tell his age by the number remaining!

The wild people amongst whom Han Yü worked were greatly influenced by him. He succeeded in making this unpromising district law-abiding and prosperous, so that eventually he regained the emperor's favour and was recalled to the capital.

Not long afterwards, when the emperor's soldiers failed to subdue some rebels, Han Yü was sent to try the effect of persuasion. With only a few attendants, he went to the rebels' camp, and argued with their leader so successfully that peace terms were agreed. Han Yü returned to the capital in triumph, having demonstrated the practical value of Confucian teaching.

At the age of fifty-six, Han Yü was taken ill and died:

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*Alas! that he did not linger awhile on earth,  
But passed so soon, with streaming hair, into the great unknown.*

A famous example of Han Yü's literary style is the *Ultimatum to the Crocodile*. It is said that a crocodile troubled the people on the river near Swatow, when he was their governor, and that this amusing Ultimatum was thrown into the river as a warning to the creature:

Oh Crocodile! Thou and I cannot rest together here. The Son of Heaven has confided this district and this people to my charge; and thou, oh goggle-eyed, by disturbing the peace of this river and devouring the people and their domestic animals, the bears, the boars, and deer of the neighbourhood, in order to batten thyself and reproduce thy kind—thou art challenging me to a struggle of life and death. And I, though of weakly frame, am I to bow the knee and yield before a crocodile? No! I am the lawful guardian of this place, and I would scorn to decline thy challenge, even were it to cost my life. Still, in virtue of my commission from the Son of Heaven, I am bound to give fair warning; and thou, O crocodile, if thou art wise, will pay due heed to my words. There before thee lies the broad ocean, the domain alike of the whale and the shrimp. Go thither and live in peace. It is but the journey of a day.

Was there really a crocodile to whom Han Yü, playfully, addressed these words? Or is the Ultimatum an allegory in which the author typifies the ignorance and superstition of the tribesmen in the form of this loathsome reptile? Or did he mean by the crocodile some human being, perhaps another official, who thwarted his efforts to improve the lot of these ill-conditioned folk? No one will ever know, but certainly the Ultimatum in its original Chinese has been regarded for centuries as a masterpiece of literary style.

A modern Chinese critic said, "Han Yü imbibed the spirit of the ancients, but he expressed it in a style of his own, thus showing a new vigour then unknown in the current prose styles."

Buddha taught that after death a man may be born again

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into this world in the form of any creature. Good Buddhists will therefore not hurt even an insect; for in so doing they may be injuring a human being, possibly a former relative or friend. Although Han Yü was a strict Confucianist, hating Buddhism and all its works, he yet had an unusual feeling of kinship with all creatures, as may be seen in this verse:

*Oh, spare the busy morning fly,  
Spare the mosquitoes of the night!  
And if their wicked trade they ply,  
Let a partition stop their flight.*

*Their span is brief from birth to death;  
Like you, they bite their little day;  
And then, with autumn's earliest breath,  
Like you, too, they are swept away.*

Perhaps Han Yü was not altogether uninfluenced by the teaching of the Buddha he despised?

Han Yü played an important part in the development of Chinese literature. He was responsible, to a large extent, for a revival of Confucian philosophy and a return to the classical style of prose compositions; but he did not just follow classical models slavishly.

In his dealings with men, Han Yü was invariably kind. After his death, his portrait was placed in a temple on a mountain in the district where he last worked, and below the picture was written one of the most beautiful of all epitaphs, "Wherever he passed, he purified."

## YO FEI

SOLDIER AND PATRIOT

(A.D. 1103-1141)

CHINESE cities are always rather lively, with plenty of people bustling about. But one day at the beginning of the twelfth century a certain town, in the province of Honan, was the scene of an outburst of the most vigorous activity. Everyone rushed into the narrow streets. Some ran to and fro panic-stricken; others stood helplessly wringing their hands and wailing; mothers called to their infants; terrified children clutched at the skirts of all who pushed past; while a general uproar of shouts, cries and groans filled the air. It was like the teeming activity of an ant-hill stirred by a stick.

Here and there in the jostling crowd, men of fixed purpose worked rapidly, tugging tables and benches from their homes or lashing together planks of wood. Very soon all this activity took on something of a common pattern. The great majority of the citizens climbed to the roofs of their houses, helping up the old folk and infants, and cursing the boys and girls who got in their way. For now that the first panic was over, the whole excitement seemed to the children like a wonderful game. The few trees in gardens and streets were quickly crowded; men, women and children sitting astride the branches like rows of enormous birds.

This amazing display of life in the town was due to the rapid approach of death. The Huang Ho, the great yellow river, had burst her banks and an uncontrollable mass of water was flooding the wide plain; so that this and many another town must be inundated. Escape was almost impossible, for there were no near-by hills; and, very soon, as far as the eye could see in every direction, there would be nothing but dirty, yellowish water that might not subside for many days. Tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, would be drowned; for a great flood was even worse than an invasion by the savage Tartars.

At the first warning of this rapidly approaching catastrophe,

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a certain farmer, named Yo, well-known for his generosity in times of famine, remained calm. He remembered lesser floods, which had been bad enough; and in his childhood he had heard tales of a very great flood that devastated the countryside for hundreds of miles and washed away a thousand villages.

Yo knew that when the main force of water struck the town, the houses with their heavy tiled roofs, now crowded with human beings, would collapse; and even those that withstood the shock might not be high enough. The water would creep up the walls, foot by foot, and wash from the roofs one and another of the human cargo, till the very tops were submerged. As for the trees, the earth round their roots would be loosened, till they toppled over, flinging their unfledged birds into the flood.

The best chance of escape was by boat, but Yo had no boat. He went into his house and, even as the first surge of dirty water washed along the street, trundled out a large earthen jar, used to store drinking-water. He made his wife climb into the jar and then handed her their baby son. Almost at once the water was deep enough to float the jar and Yo pushed it through the swirling waves, steering it past all obstacles, until he was out of his depth and could do no more. Then he was overwhelmed and drowned.

An earthen jar is a fragile craft, but fortunately this makeshift boat was carried by the flood to the outskirts of another town; and there mother and son were rescued.

For the next few years it was as much as the mother could do to feed and clothe her boy—whose *ming* name was Fei, which means flying. She could not afford to send Fei to school, but she made him sharpen a willow stick to a fine point, to serve as a pen-brush, and she took a shallow box and put damp sand over the bottom. This sand box and stick served as a copybook, from which the child learned to read and write his first easy characters.

Other boys in the neighbourhood went to a school where the teacher was a famous scholar, who once taught military science in the emperor's army. In those days, boys at school not only learnt the classics of Confucius, and how to read and write and make up poems in the classical style, but they learnt, also, all manner of military exercises. The province of Honan was a long

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way from the Great Wall, but of late the Tartars had been troublesome. They raided far south of the wall and none knew when they might appear. If they came, every man and boy would be needed to defend the town; and, besides, young officers were always wanted for the emperor's army. So the school curriculum included archery, swordsmanship, dart-throwing and fighting with spears.

Yo Fei learned a lot from his mother, but she could not teach him the use of weapons. He longed to go to school and sometimes crept to the closed door, listening from without to what the teacher was telling his pupils. After school hours, when there was no one about, Yo Fei would slip into the schoolroom and gaze in wonder and admiration at the writing and diagrams drawn on the wall. Once, when he was ten years old, he wrote on the school wall one of his own poems. Next day the teacher saw this poem and was astonished. "Who has written this?" he demanded, for he did not know any of his pupils was so brilliant.

In China the relationship between teacher and pupil is intimate. The pupil respects his teacher with something like awe and a good teacher cherishes a promising pupil as a son. Thus it came about that when Yo Fei's poem was discovered, the teacher was at pains to seek the boy who had written it, and not only welcomed Yo Fei to the school as a pupil, but when he learned that his father was dead, formally adopted him.

By the time Yo Fei was a young man he combined physical strength and mental skill so successfully that he not only outshone all his companions in book work, but could also shoot a cross-bow with a resistance of more than one thousand pounds. His favourite books were *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, a rather dull history written by Confucius, and a famous treatise on the Art of War, said to have been written in the sixth century B.C. It is a remarkable fact that this old Chinese book on the Art of War was translated into French in A.D. 1782, into English in 1910, and was again published in 1944, for the use of British and American soldiers fighting in the Far East against Japan.

When Yo Fei's teacher and adopted father died, the youth mourned him as a good son should. Following the strict ritual approved by Confucius, Yo Fei wore clothes of undyed cloth and

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for twenty-seven months lived alone, in a shed erected for the purpose, close to the grave.

After this period of mourning, Yo Fei returned to his military studies and took part in the State Military Competitive Examination, at which the most successful students engaged in mock combats. It so happened that at this tournament a Royal Prince, famed for tilting and jousting, took his place amongst the judges. At the end of the day, when Yo Fei had vanquished all the other students, this prince, to everyone's surprise and consternation, challenged Yo Fei to single combat.

It was a serious crime for any commoner to injure a relative of the Son of Heaven, and the judges hinted that such a contest could not be quite fair, but the prince would not give way. So Yo Fei rode out to meet the prince, uncertain what he should do. When they met in mid-field, the prince whispered to Yo Fei that he wished to win the coveted trophy, a Golden Rose and a Red Garland, and that he would reward Yo Fei if he made it a shadow fight. Yo Fei protested that to do so would be false and unfair to the other military students. Whereupon the prince became angry and, striking Yo Fei with his sword-hilt, turned his horse to attack him. Naturally Yo Fei could do no more than parry his antagonist's blows and the judges, in order to end such an unequal contest, hastened to award the trophy to the prince.

Yo Fei was so annoyed by this injustice that he asked permission to challenge the prince to a fair fight; and the prince, now that he had the trophy, agreed. In the fight that followed Yo Fei slew the prince.

The fame of this exploit spread far and wide; but the emperor looked with disfavour on the young hero and would not appoint him to any command in the army. There were rebels at that time who thought to take advantage of the emperor's dislike of Yo Fei; and, supposing the young man to have disloyal feelings, offered him bribes if he would join their band and fight with them. But Yo Fei replied, "I will serve only my country." His mother, noting these things, took her son to make obeisance to the Ancestral Tablets of the family; and then, telling him to remove his upper garments, tattooed on his bare back four characters meaning, "I serve my country with loyalty."

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It was not long before Yo Fei's opportunity came. The Chinese emperors at the beginning of this century were humane and tolerant—being perhaps the most enlightened of all the Sons of Heaven. They were so interested in literature, the arts, and philosophy that they rather overlooked the constant menace of the Tartar barbarians. The Tartars, seeing the prosperity brought by the mild peaceful civilisation of China, were all the more greedy to plunder the well-cultivated plains of the north, and, in the year 1126, they swarmed south from the Great Wall.

They caught the Chinese army unprepared, inflicting on them a severe defeat and capturing the emperor, his father and the whole court—all of whom they carried away into captivity. Amongst their prisoners was a minister, named Ch'in Kuei, who was to play a vital part in the short tragedy of Yo Fei.

The prince who next ascended the Dragon Throne needed all the military talent he could muster, and was glad to call upon Yo Fei. The young man so distinguished himself that he was promoted rapidly to the rank of Lieutenant-General.

Unfortunately the new emperor was a timid man, who shifted his capital to Nanking, so as to be further from the barbarians. This cautious move only encouraged the enemy and, as they continued to drive southwards, the emperor again fled. All the northern provinces were now in the hands of the Tartars and the military situation was so bad that, at first, Yo Fei could do no more than hold the enemy in check. Mindful of his own military training at school, Yo Fei was careful to see that his soldiers were well drilled, disciplined and confident. Soon men were saying, "It is easy to move a mountain but not easy to defeat the troops of Yo Fei."

On one occasion the emperor asked Yo Fei, rather helplessly, "When will there be peace?" And he replied, "When our officials no longer seek to enrich themselves and when our soldiers no longer fear death."

It was while the emperor was moving south, away from the Tartars, that the former minister, Ch'in Kuei, arrived unexpectedly. After six years in captivity this man had been persuaded by the Tartars to turn traitor, and now they released him secretly in order that he could play his villainous part. When Ch'in Kuei reached the Chinese court he concocted a wonderful story of



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how he had escaped from the Tartars after slaying the guards of his prison; and, with this story and because of his former rank, he gained the complete confidence of the emperor, and became Prime Minister.

Meanwhile Yo Fei inflicted several defeats on the Tartars, driving them slowly northwards. His successes did not at all please Ch'in Kuei and when a message reached the court from Yo Fei, asking if the fight could be carried into the province still occupied by the enemy, the traitor minister persuaded the emperor to refuse permission. Instead, Ch'in Kuei negotiated a treaty by which the northern provinces were ceded to the Tartars.

This treaty caused consternation in the Chinese army and was a bitter blow to Yo Fei; but, luckily, the Tartars soon broke the treaty by invading the province of Honan. This gave Yo Fei a chance to strike another blow at the enemy, and he drove them right out of Honan. As he followed up his victory, a secret messenger came to him, bringing one of the Golden Tablets used only by the Son of Heaven in times of crisis. It was an imperative order to return at once to court.

Yo Fei's army was in a position to inflict a crushing defeat on the enemy, and he would have liked to ignore the emperor's order. But another messenger arrived with a second Golden Tablet, then came a third, a fourth and a fifth, until there were twelve in all. The young general had been away from court for a considerable time and could only suppose there was a rebellion in the south, or some other calamity threatening the emperor's person. Reluctantly he broke off the campaign and hastened southwards. He could not know that the Golden Tablets had been stolen by Ch'in Kuei and sent him without the emperor's knowledge.

While Yo Fei was hurrying to the emperor's aid, the traitor minister bribed an official to present a memorial accusing Yo Fei of sedition. When he reached the capital he was arrested, the heavy wooden board worn by criminals was fastened round his neck, his wrists were chained, his ankles shackled, and he was thrown into prison.

At his trial the judge asked Yo Fei if he was a traitor. He replied by taking off his upper garment and showing his tattooed back with the words, "I serve my country with loyalty." Having

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examined the case fully, the judge was convinced of the prisoner's innocence. But he knew the powerful Ch'in Kuei would be satisfied only with a verdict of guilty. Rather than pass an unjust sentence the judge left his official hat hanging in his office and disappeared. The crafty Ch'in Kuei then found another judge, willing to serve his wicked ends, and the unfortunate Yo Fei was pronounced guilty.

It was the practice in China to force a convict by torture to confess his guilt before execution. Perhaps judges felt less responsible for their verdicts if they were thus underwritten by the criminals.

While Yo Fei was suffering terrible tortures he made a sign to the officials indicating that he wanted paper and a pen-brush. Instead of writing the confession they expected, he made an accusation against Ch'in Kuei. After two months, as the condemned man continued to maintain his innocence, Ch'in Kuei himself wrote an execution order and Yo Fei was strangled.

Only the emperor had the right to order the execution of a general, so the wicked minister reported that his victim had died in prison. The various honours that had been bestowed on Yo Fei were officially cancelled and his body buried in a common grave. Ch'in Kuei got away with his crime and, for some years longer, enjoyed the confidence and favours of the emperor.

Yo Fei's victories were not of outstanding significance, and there is no reason to suppose he had any very strong temptation to be disloyal. How comes it, then, that his memory is still cherished so warmly by his countrymen; that Chinese children tell each other the story of his valour; that he is the hero of one of the most popular novels; and that large numbers of Chinese go every year on pilgrimage to the mound at the corner of the West Lake dedicated to his memory, or to visit his tomb in Hangchow?

Every Chinese is an historian. Every Chinese considers present events in relation to what has happened in the past. More than twenty years after Yo Fei was put to death, the true story of his murder came out. The emperor then reigning restored his title, and ordered that his ill-treated body be taken from the common grave for reburial in a magnificent tomb. When the funeral procession passed, the Son of Heaven himself kowtowed. A shrine

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was built containing images of Yo Fei, his mother, his wife and children, and even his children's husbands and wives and he was given the posthumous title of "Heroically Loyal".

Even this did not satisfy the Chinese sense of justice. Honour was done to the memory of the hero, but the villain, Ch'in Kuei, had died a wealthy prince with many honourable titles. So, fifty years later, an edict was issued depriving him of his rank as prince and changing his title to one meaning "False and Foul".

Yet another thirty years passed and the long dead Yo Fei was further honoured with the official title of Prince. Close to the tomb of the patriot, ugly iron images of Ch'in Kuei and his wife, who was his partner in crime, were set up in the open, without even the protection of a roof, so that those who came to bless the memory of Yo Fei by lighting little candles at his shrine, could spit upon the image of his murderer. The very name Ch'in Kuei came to be used contemptuously for a spittoon. Years later a poet wrote of this tomb with its iron images of the traitor and his wife:

*How happy you are, blue mountains,  
To hold the bones of the loyal!  
But you, iron, what is your sin,  
That you should form images of traitors?*

The foreigner may be puzzled slightly to understand why the twelfth-century patriot, Yo Fei, means so much to the twentieth-century Chinese, but there can be no mistaking the emotion his unhappy story brings to the hearts of his countrymen. Indeed, at a performance of a historical drama based on Yo Fei's life, in the year 1678, a spectator became so worked up at the sight of the national hero being executed that he jumped on to the stage and stabbed to death the unfortunate actor who was playing the part of the villain Ch'in Kuei.



### THE CRANE LETTER ARRIVING AMONG THE HILLS

Letters sent from Court seeking the advice of Hermits were written in special characters known as "crane head writing". This picture shows a Royal summons being delivered to two hermits. Painting by T'ANG YIN (1466-1524). British Museum copyright



LAO TZU RIDING AWAY ON HIS GREEN COW

Lao Tzu is here represented not as an old man but as a Buddha showing Buddhist influence in Chinese Art (by an unknown Early Ming artist)





KUAN YIN, THE GODDESS OF MERCY  
Painting by Mu Ch'i (13th century)



AN ARHAT WATCHING DRAGONS FIGHTING  
Painted by LU HSIEN-CHUNG (13th century)

英清社行

特  
款



TU FU (British Museum copyright)



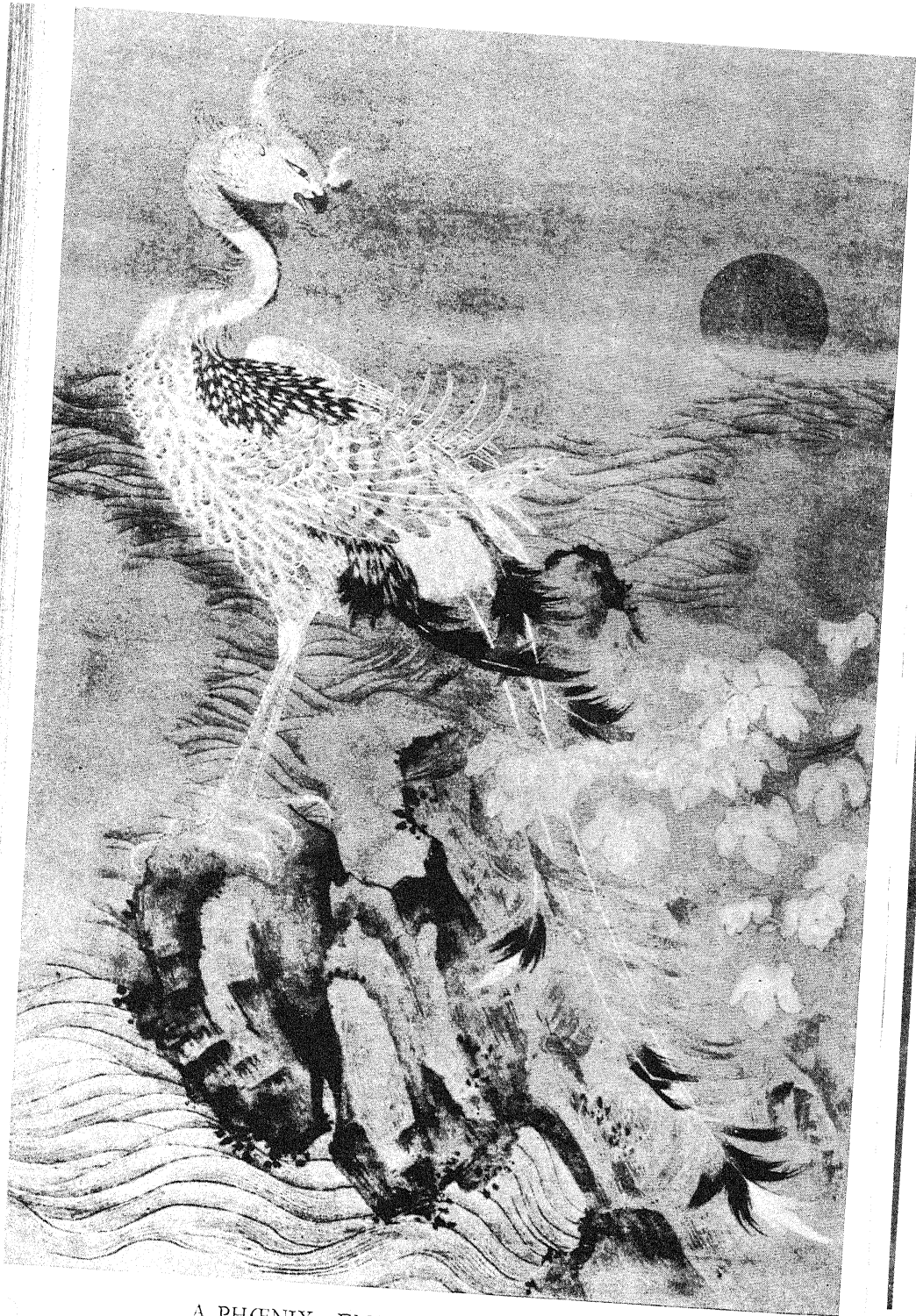


LI TAI PO

This picture by an unknown artist is said to represent Tu Fu's friend,  
the poet Li Po



YANG KUEI-FEI  
Concubine of Hsuan Tsung



A PHENIX—EMBLEM OF THE EMPRESS  
Attributed to CH' IEN HSUAN





BOYS PLAYING AT BEING EMPEROR

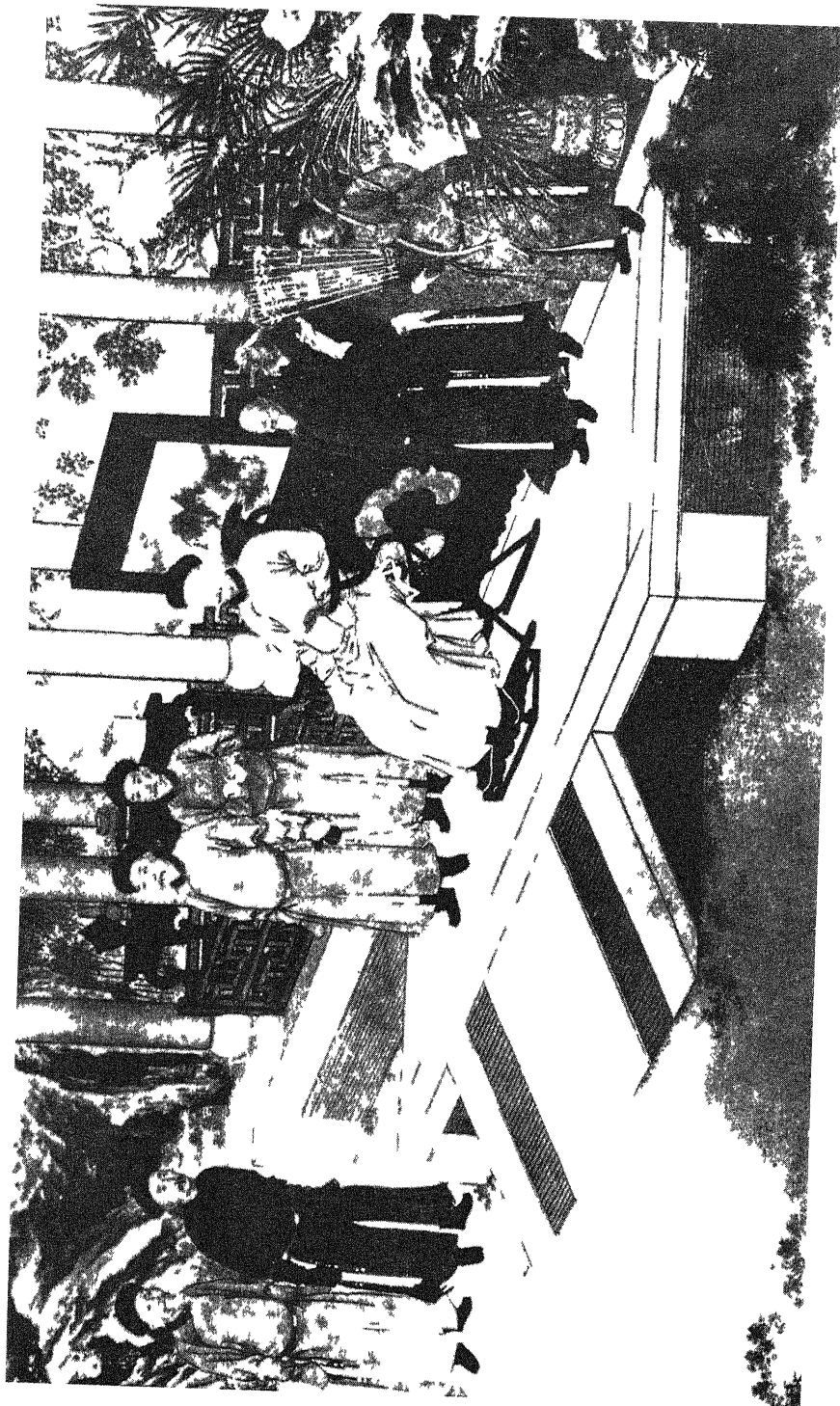
After YU CH'IN (about A.D. 1542)



AN ARCHER  
Painted by T'ANG YIN (16th century)



A WOMAN LIGHTING A FIREWORK  
By CH'U YING (Ming period)



THE EMPEROR CH'EN LUNG

From a painting by a Jesuit Father, Guisepe Castiglione  
A D 1688 1766

## THE EMPRESS YANG

WIFE OF NING TSUNG, 4TH EMPEROR OF SOUTHERN SUNG  
DYNASTY

(A D. 1168-1224)

THE Dowager Empress Li, mother of the young emperor Ning Tsung, who ascended the throne in the year 1194, was formidable. No one liked her, many feared her and all knew her reputation for cruelty, even if they did not quite believe the story that she had murdered a concubine of rank only one degree below that of empress. It was said also that when her husband, the former emperor, showed more favour towards one of the palace women than she approved, the Empress Li had the woman's hand cut off and sent on a covered dish to be presented to the emperor at his early morning audience.

Such cruelty was not surprising, for the Dowager was the daughter of a bandit. By her beauty in youth, she had found a way into the court and then, by scheming and bribery, had climbed till she was seated beside the emperor on the Dragon Throne.

When her son, Ning Tsung, became emperor, the Dowager retained great power. She was disliked heartily by the common people, but Ning Tsung had been well-trained in filial duty and she could count on him to obey her least wish.

In the Dowager's palace, called very inappropriately the Palace of Benevolent Blessings, there was a little girl known as the Mulberry Caterpillar. She was a foundling, brought up by a wandering minstrel named Chang. Where Chang and his wife came from no one knew; they had turned up in the streets of the capital, then at Hangchow, and found employment in the palace. The Dowager was fond of theatrical performances and Chang became leader of her orchestra, his wife gave displays of dancing, and the child, the Mulberry Caterpillar, was a born acrobat and, besides, could take small parts in plays, which she acted with distinction.

The Dowager, who loved no one but herself and her son,



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took quite a fancy for the bright, quick-witted child. She praised her acting and when she met her about the palace, stopped to pat her on the head; or stood and watched, with a rather sour smile, when she saw the Caterpillar turning somersaults in the women's court-yard.

The child got into the way of mimicking the people around her. She watched some important minister coming away from an audience and then she strutted about giving orders in the very manner and voice of the great one, to the amusement of the palace women. Another time she might mimic a pompous official or a soldier on guard. With an odd cloak for costume, or a chance stick and the nimble wit of an impersonator, she could transform herself into the personage she mocked and draw a laugh from ladies-in-waiting and court servants.

But mimicry is a dangerous form of jesting, for those who laugh never know when it may be their turn to be scoffed; and, moreover, the Mulberry Caterpillar was shown too much favour by the Dowager Empress. A favourite has no friends, and there were some who envied the child's daring manners and would have liked to see her fall into disgrace.

One day, when the Dowager was having a bath, attendants stood about in the large ante-room of the bath-house. There were tiring-women, fan-bearers, hair-dressers, a foot-binder and maids-of-honour, all waiting their turn to serve the royal mistress when she came from the inner chamber. Hanging on a clothes-stand was the gorgeous outer robe of imperial yellow silk brocade, with its Dragon and Phoenix design, a colour and pattern sacred to majesty. Near-by, on another stand, was the great head-dress, covered in pearls, with large jewelled flaps like gigantic ears.

Into this room flitted the little Mulberry Caterpillar, with the care-free assurance of a favourite. The waiting women ceased their low-toned conversations and watched the child as her mischievous eyes rested on the royal robe. Significant glances were exchanged. Here was a chance to trip the favourite; to see the mimic caught by her mimicry.

A maid-of-honour stooped down to the child and whispered that the bath had only just begun . . . there was plenty of time. One of the hair-dressers held up a corner of the Dowager's robe and smiled encouragement.

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The child took a few steps towards the clothes-stand and then stopped to glance at the closed door of the bathroom, her eyes sparkling, her lips parted, her breath held. All around her were nodding heads and smiling faces. Next moment the Mulberry Caterpillar was wrapping the robe of authority round her slender shoulders. Holding its too-long skirts in her small hands, she tripped to the mirror and, as she did so, her young face somehow captured a little of the habitual ferocity of the Dowager's countenance. One of the tiring-women quickly seized the pearl head-dress and, jamming it on the child's head, completed the disguise.

"I'm empress, I'm empress," cried the Mulberry Caterpillar, all caution forgotten; and, as though in answer to the cry, the bathroom door opened. Down on their knees went the waiting-women, leaving the child standing alone before one of the cruellest women who ever shared the Dragon Throne.

"We could not stop her, your Majesty," whispered one of the attendants.

"For such presumption she is worthy to die," murmured another.

All were confident that this time the favourite had gone too far. She would be beaten to death probably, or strangled; at least she would be driven from the palace, back to the obscurity from which she had come.

Perhaps the waiting-women over-played their parts and the cunning old Dowager read their envy, as she had learned to read between the lines of many an official document. Perhaps she liked the uncringing manner and gaiety of the child and had already some plan for her future. She turned to the kneeling women and said contemptuously, "Who knows but that this girl will one day wear yellow robes in her own right?"

In China the wives of emperors were selected from the common people. On the whole this practice was satisfactory, many of the empresses bringing simple, homely virtues into court life. It was important that an emperor should have sons, from whom a suitable successor might be chosen and by whom the Ancestor Ceremonies could be performed. So an emperor was provided usually with a number of wives. There could be only one reigning empress, who was supreme amongst the court ladies; but there was, also, a First Concubine, then one or more Imperial

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Concubines and an indefinite number of ordinary or lesser Concubines. The rights and privileges of all these wives were clearly graded.

In China, as elsewhere, ideas of feminine beauty changed from time to time. *The Book of Songs* describes a famous beauty of the fourth century B.C.:

*Her skin was like congealed ointment,  
Her neck was like the tree grub,  
Her teeth were like melon seeds.*

and we read of an empress of the second century A.D. who "had blood enough to colour her fat, fat enough to ornament her flesh and flesh enough to cover her bones".

It was not sufficient, however, that an emperor's concubine should be beautiful. We do not know just when the Dowager Empress Li thought of the Mulberry Caterpillar as a suitable concubine for her son, but some time after the unlucky occasion when she caught the child wearing the royal robe she began to train her for that important office.

Biographers say the Mulberry Caterpillar was "clever, beautiful, talented and gallant", and, considering the haphazard way she was brought up by the minstrel Chang and his dancing wife, she must have been exceptionally clever to master the strenuous studies now before her. She had to learn the classics, which included ancient history, music and calligraphy. She had to study poetry and learn to write poems in the classical form. She was taught to play a good game of chess, and to sing. Already she knew the difficult posture dances and, as an acrobat, took very readily to horse-riding.

The emperor Ning Tsung was of the Sung Dynasty and it has been said that "the woman who could read and write commanded respect in the Sung and she who could compose poems possessed the equivalent of high birth and family influence".

No one knew anything of the birth of the Mulberry Caterpillar and she had no family to push her forward at court, so that she needed all her cleverness and native wit if she was to become a concubine of the emperor.

While studying under the direction of the bleak old Dowager,

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she continued to act, and it was noted that the young emperor, who was married already to the Empress Han, and had some scores of concubines, rarely missed a theatrical performance at his mother's palace. Indeed, the emperor was so attracted by the little actress that he used to slip away from the beautiful women of his court and seek her in the gardens and orchards or on the lakes of the Palace of Benevolent Blessings. Her poems of this time tell of chance meetings, in which, perhaps, chance did not play the all-important role; of unexpected encounters, which may not have been altogether unexpected by the Son of Heaven.

The Mulberry Caterpillar became a frequent companion of the emperor and one of her poems has a daring reference to Mandarin Ducks, a symbol in Chinese poetry for the constant love of man and wife. She was a sporting companion, too; for she turned up at archery contests and applauded joyfully when the emperor's arrows struck the target, and at polo matches she rode round the field, on a pony from the royal stables, retrieving the ball.

The old Dowager encouraged this courtship, possibly because she really admired the vivacity of her protégée; but, more probably, because she needed someone she could trust at her son's side. Ning Tsung was an amiable, good-natured emperor but easily influenced, and there was a constant struggle at court between various officials who wanted to control him for their own benefit. At this time the dominant party was led by General Han, brother of the empress.

One night the Dowager had a party in the Palace of Benevolent Blessings and, during the festivities, formally gave the Mulberry Caterpillar to her son. It was considered a great honour to be the concubine of an emperor, though, in fact, girls who attained this rank might soon lose favour and find themselves overlooked; thereafter living a purposeless life, doing nothing amidst palace luxury. But the Mulberry Caterpillar was not likely to be overlooked. She had too much character; and, besides, she was the gift of a parent and for Ning Tsung to ever neglect her would be a serious breach of filial duty.

Not long after this the Dowager died and the emperor came more than ever under the influence of the Empress Han and her ambitious brother. He made little effort to cope with affairs of state, leaving such matters to his ministers.

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The Sung Dynasty was a great period for art. Magnificent palaces were built in Hangchow, very high standards were reached in the casting of bronze, the cutting of jade, the weaving of silk and the firing of porcelain. Printed books were cheap and abundant and landscape painting was at its best. Ning Tsung spent much of his time painting, some of his pictures being renowned later for their "distinguished ability".

A Sung artist in an *Essay on Landscape Painting* said that an artist "should nourish in his bosom cheerfulness and a happy mood". And from the Mulberry Caterpillar's poems it is evident that life at court, at least for the artist emperor and his concubines, was both cheerful and happy. She describes how she and other palace girls had a swing in an orchard and how they rivalled one another, to see who could swing highest. Naturally the other girls could not equal the former acrobat:

*The Emperor is suddenly elate,  
Amidst the hundred blossoms spying  
A swing, where palace girls are vying  
All trying  
To imitate  
That one who soars like a bird flying!*

During the Mulberry Caterpillar's first year as a concubine, she was officially honoured with one of the emperor's titles, "Peaceful Joy". Two years later, in recognition of her literary talents, she was made *Chieh Yü*, an honour bestowed on the foremost scholar amongst the court ladies. Next year she was promoted to *Wan I*, or Imperial Concubine and, three years after that, to *Kuei Fei*, or First Imperial Concubine.

The proverb, *It is better to be born without arms or legs than without relatives*, shows the importance of family connections in China. The Mulberry Caterpillar, now second in rank only to the empress, had no relatives. She had not even a family name. Everyone knew the romantic story of her youth, and the common people, who loved romance, liked her all the better for it: but it would have been more dignified to have some certain origin.

So there were mysterious comings and goings of confidential messengers, and then a rumour ran through the court. By an

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extraordinary chance the popular *Kuei Fei* had found her family! It was, as yet, only a report and, naturally, the matter would require thorough investigation. Then one day, a scholar named Yang Tzu-shan, of very respectable family, arrived at the capital beseeching an audience of the *Kuei Fei*. This was graciously granted and, in the presence of suitable officials, Yang told of a long-lost sister, stolen away when a child. He recalled how, when they were playing together as children, the little girl had poked her finger through his new kite; and how when she was sweeping leaves with a toy broom he had teased her, by kicking away the neat heaps she made. The *Kuei Fei* listened to Yang's story as one in a dream, and then it all came back to her; she remembered that kite and the toy broom as distinctly as though it all happened yesterday. Here, indeed, was her long-lost brother!

This delightful play-acting deceived no one and pleased everybody. The emperor was glad his favourite came from such a reputable family as the Yangs and the whole court shared the *Kuei Fei's* joy at finding such a learned and useful brother. As for the minstrel Chang and his dancing wife, no one bothered to ask what *they* thought of the story; but, it is said, the Mulberry Caterpillar continued to provide for them through one of her agents.

The sudden death of the Empress Han caused a crisis. There were many who aspired to take her place and no precedent that favoured the *Kuei Fei*. Every politician who wanted power, every noble who sought riches, every general who wanted promotion—all pushed forward their own candidates, expecting some reward if their lady won and fearing revenge if she failed. The Mulberry Caterpillar, now of the honourable family of Yang, wisely stood aloof, allowing her claims to be pressed by an official named Shih Mi-yüan.

One by one the claimants were rejected till the issue lay between the *Kuei Fei* and a certain Lady Ts'ao, who was backed by General Han. Lady Ts'ao was renowned for her beauty and dignity and had a big advantage in being sponsored by the brother of the late empress. On the other hand, as Shih pointed out, the *Kuei Fei* was a good scholar, skilful at writing poems and, above all, had been given to the emperor by his mother.

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This last point turned the scales in her favour and the Mulberry Caterpillar, who came to court as a child acrobat, rose to the dizzy height of Empress of China.

General Han hated the new empress and resented her success over his favourite, the Lady Ts'ao. A struggle began, to determine who should dominate the weak-willed emperor. Although the general was commander-in-chief of the army and powerful at court, he was disliked by the common people; and this for a remarkable reason. He had opposed a famous philosopher named Chu Hsi, who died in the year 1200. Chu, and other thinkers of the Sung Dynasty, reformed the teaching of the Confucianists. Scholars were always debating whether men are innately good and become corrupted, or whether they are born with original sin and have to learn goodness. Chu believed men are naturally good. When exposed to the temptations of life they may sin, but like a pearl in a bowl of dirty water the original goodness remains pure and unchanged.

Chu and his followers formed what was called the School of the Way, that is to say the "way of truth". General Han opposed this teaching vehemently. He called it the School of Lies and, although the twelfth-century Chinese were too civilised to allow actual persecution, he prevented Chu's followers from holding office and placed Chu under police observation. Soon after the philosopher's death the capital city suffered from serious fires and the common people said, "The wrath of Heaven has sent these fires to avenge Chu Hsi."

General Han managed to get a minister who supported the Empress Yang banished and, later, murdered. It was evidently his intention to whittle away her friends until she stood alone. But in the year 1203 the general suffered a defeat at the hands of the Tartars and this gave the empress a chance. She arranged for a memorial to be presented to the emperor charging the general with exceeding his orders. She made subtle suggestions to her husband to ensure its success, but at the audience Ning Tsung, to her amazement and distress, rejected the memorial in silence. This was serious and even dangerous, because the general had his spies at court and soon knew the secret part the empress had played in the affair.

What was worse, General Han was appointed Imperial Tutor.

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The emperor was no longer a boy with lessons to learn, so that the tutor had no duties to perform, but the office was profitable and a great honour. An Imperial Tutor was the only person who might come into the presence of the Son of Heaven without facing north, and he had unrivalled opportunities for influencing his master.

The outlook for the Empress Yang, her "brother" Yang Tzu-shan, and friendly officials like Shih Mi-yüan was, indeed, unpromising. Something drastic had to be done. Yang and Shih plotted to assassinate the general and, there can be little doubt, the empress concurred.

The deed was to be done early one morning as the general came to the emperor's audience. One of his spies obtained details of the plot and sent a warning message, which reached the general on the evening before the attempt was to be made. He was at a party and, being drunk, could not understand the message. He boasted that he feared no one and, roaring with laughter, thrust the paper into the flames of a red candle. Next morning, as General Han rode to court, trying to recollect what the paper had been about, he was set upon by Yang Tzu-shan and Shih Mi-yüan and murdered.

The weak-willed emperor was easily placated and so far forgave the outrage as to make Shih his chief minister.

After a reign of thirty years Ning Tsung died and the Empress Yang had to face a difficult political problem. The prince chosen by the late emperor as Heir Apparent boasted openly that he intended to banish the experienced Shih to the farthest island of the empire. A young man who could talk so foolishly was unlikely to make a wise Son of Heaven and the Empress Yang decided to alter the succession.

Her authority as Dowager Empress, reinforced by her great popularity with the common people, enabled her to set aside the Heir Apparent and place on the throne another prince, whose posthumous title was Li Tsung. He reigned for the next forty years. They were difficult years for China; the Mongols, under the famous Jenghiz Khan, were gathering strength, and were destined to overrun the greater part of Asia including the Chinese empire. Li Tsung was probably the best choice that could have been made.



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On her seventieth birthday the Dowager Empress Yang was given the title "Benevolent and Wise"; a title which describes accurately her character. Two years later she died and was given the posthumous title "The Venerated and Sacred, Gracious and Vital". The word "vital" seems to suit her personality. Had she lived in a different period, or had Ning Tsung been a more vigorous emperor, her part in Chinese history might have been more important.

Fifty poems by the Empress Yang survive to this day, and if they lack some of the qualities of great literature they certainly convey the vivacity and gay spirits of their author. Her few words describing palace life during the languid midsummer weather make us share the boredom of the court ladies, and when she describes crab-apple blossom we feel the fresh spring winds blowing through the gardens of the thirty-six Han palaces.

It is said in *The Book of Songs*:

*A woman with a long tongue  
Is a flight of steps leading to calamity;  
For disorder does not come from heaven,  
But is brought about by women.*

It would not have been surprising if the Mulberry Caterpillar, after her strange metamorphosis into an empress, had been a troublesome influence at court; if she had been cruel and domineering, like the old Dowager Empress Li; or an extravagant luxury-demanding woman, like her namesake the famous beauty Yang Kuei-fei. But she was neither. One of her early poems pokes fun at the elaborate make-up of court women, and a poem written when she was empress describes how she set an example in simplicity:

*And as I thus am decorous  
The palace ladies, emulous,  
Rouge lightly and are moderate in dress.*

Portraits of the time confirm her words. Gone are the jewelled beauty-spots, the face patches, the artificial eyebrows

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and heavy make-up fashionable in the days of the Dowager Empress Li.

The records say that the Empress Yang ruled the other palace women with good-natured tolerance, and encouraged the emperor to cherish husbandry and farming as did the sage rulers Yao and Shun.

## P'U SUNG-LING

### THE STORY TELLER

(Born A.D. 1621)

At some ports they hoist a cone, or fly a flag, over the harbour when a mail steamer is sighted on the horizon, so that everyone in the town may know. The signal brings a fresh interest into the life of the place and the inhabitants leave their work and go down to the sea to welcome new arrivals. In China there was a similar custom to announce the birth of a child. Outside the home where the baby was born they hoisted a signal over the door, so that all the neighbours knew the glad tidings and could hasten to bring their congratulations.

If the sign was a wooden bow everyone rejoiced, for that meant the child was a boy; but if a small cotton cloth fluttered over the door, then it was a girl, for a girl when she grew to womanhood would be concerned with housework and weaving.

In the year 1621, a family named P'u, living in a small town in the province of Shantung, hung a bow over their door. A seventeenth-century boy would scarcely need a bow when he grew up, but the custom came from the days when men hunted, or fought with bows and arrows, or, if they were nobles, indulged in the sport of archery.

When men achieve greatness in this world there is usually some queer story told of their birth, and it is said the father of the P'u child fell asleep and dreamed that an emaciated Buddhist priest entered the room. His tattered robe, only half covering his lean body, disclosed a curious dark piece of plaster on his chest, about the size of the copper coin known as a "cash". When the father woke he saw the newly born child had a similar dark patch on his little body. It was supposed this dream foretold that the boy, who was given the name Sung-ling, would grow up a weakling, like the phantom priest, and suffer neglect and poverty.

Years later P'u Sung-ling wrote, "As a child I was thin and constantly ailing and unable to hold my own in the battle of life."

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Nevertheless he was strong enough to go through the early training of a scholar. He was not too ill to learn to write, tracing large-sized characters through a horn book; and to read and recite the famous *Three Character Classic*, which begins, rather drearily:

*Men, one and all, in infancy  
Are virtuous at heart;  
Their moral tendencies the same,  
Their practice wide apart.*

Little P'u was not expected to understand these words. He had to learn the sounds and shapes of the five hundred and sixty different characters in the book; but that was no light task.

After mastering this elementary work, P'u studied the classics and, at the age of twenty, took his first degree. He then went on studying for his master's degree, after obtaining which he might expect an official appointment.

Perhaps he had been told about his father's dream; but, anyway, he developed a strong relish for strange stories. Instead of working for his degree on orthodox lines, the young man allowed his fancy to lead him into by-ways that were not at all approved by authority.

A famous philosopher of the third century B.C. said, "You know the music of earth but you have not heard the music of Heaven." The examinations were based on the very practical teaching of Confucius which might be likened to "the music of earth", but young P'u was not content to spend all his time studying "the music of earth"; he wanted to listen for the "music of Heaven". He was interested in the supernatural—in anything that could not be proven or explained, and when he heard of ghosts or miracles he pushed aside his text-books and listened.

The examination standards were very high and no man passed the master's degree without diligent study. So it is not surprising that P'u failed. At the age of about twenty-five he found himself without any hope of an official post and with no income. "Alas," he said, "I shall now have no resource to fall back upon in my old age." The word he used for resource was *liao*, and from this time onwards he called his study his *liao*—for there

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he meant to write a book that would be his support in old age.

The examination failure, and his interest in stories of the supernatural, made P'u contemptuous of the scholar class and, for the rest of his life, he spoke and wrote of them as though they were little better than charlatans.

He recalled the story of a celebrated musician who, when sitting alone one night playing on his lute, saw a man with a tiny face walk in and begin to stare hard at him, the stranger's face all the time growing larger and larger. "I'm not going to match myself against a devil," cried the musician and blew out the light. "As for me," said P'u, "I cannot with my poor light match myself against the hobgoblins of this age"—meaning that he would not compete with the scholar-officials in their own kind of scholarship.

He resolved to live at home, writing stories of strange events; and in that way satisfy his inclination and also provide a *liao* to support him when he was old.

The scholar class contributed much to the unique success of civilisation in China, but by the seventeenth century scholars had become altogether too narrow in outlook. They demanded privileges, but at the same time despised the common people. They stuck closely to the classics, denying all else the name of learning. They hated originality in art. In their judgment, writing not modelled on an ancient classic could not be literature, and they would have nothing to do with it. The classics consisted of poetry, essays and history, so that these forms, they argued, might be imitated until the world was full of books; but the writers of antiquity never wrote novels or stories and, therefore, all fiction was contemptible. Such was the attitude of scholars in P'u Sung-ling's day.

The common people have had always great respect for learning but they laughed at these seventeenth-century scholars, as they laughed at the Buddhist and Taoist priests. There was a popular joke about a tiger who hunted all day and came back with nothing. When asked how this happened the beast replied, "At dawn I met a schoolboy, but he was, I feared, too thin and skinny. At noon I found a priest and let him go, knowing him to be full of nothing but wind. At dusk I met a scholar, but there was no use bringing him

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back, since he would be so dry and hard he would only break our teeth."

There was, then, justification for the resolve of P'u to go his own way. He settled down obstinately, in his study, which was "chill and desolate as a monastery", to write stories that he knew would be scorned by the only men who could read.

For years he worked, "poor as a priest with his begging bowl". One of his stories tells of some students who went to a spiritualist séance to learn, in advance, the results of their examinations. The "medium" disclosed that the candidate who had written the best essay would fail, because the examiner, instead of reading the essays himself, handed them over to "some half-dozen illiterate fellows . . . drunken assistants who do not know the mere rudiments of composition". The "medium" said, "It is strange, indeed, that a man's literary powers and his destiny should thus be out of harmony." P'u was thinking of his own failure when he wrote this story. He blamed the examiner; but he believed, also, that it was his destiny to be unsuccessful, perhaps to atone for ill-deeds in a former existence. "I am but the dust in a sunbeam," he said, "a fit laughing-stock for devils . . . I have been tossed hither and thither in the direction of the ruling wind like a flower falling in filthy places . . . but I have no right to complain."

Many years earlier a famous author had written a book of thirty volumes entitled *Supernatural Researches*. P'u was not interested in research. He collected accounts of weird events, magic, devilry and ghosts for the sake of their stories. When he heard of any queer happening he tried to find out all about it, and then settled down, at the desk in his "chill and desolate" *liao*, to make it into a short story. "Midnight finds me with an expiring lamp, while the wind whistles mournfully without; and over my cheerless table I piece together my tales."

For something like thirty years P'u laboured, collecting stories from many sources. "I get people to commit what they tell me to writing," he explained, "and subsequently I dress it up in the form of a story; and thus in the lapse of time my friends from all quarters have supplied me with quantities of material which, from my habit of collecting, has grown into a vast pile."

A surprising amount of this "vast pile" related to devils and

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fox-girls, so that P'u thought of publishing a selection of tales with the title *Devil and Fox Stories*. But, for some reason, he abandoned this idea and went on with his main work until he had completed hundreds of stories.

When P'u was fifty-eight years old the work was ready for publication, but, alas, the author was too poor to meet the heavy expense of cutting the necessary printing blocks. He consoled himself with writing a satirical essay, describing his work and how it came to be written. The essay is packed closely with the classical allusions which the scholars of that time loved; but, at the same time, it pours scorn on their scholarship.

P'u wrote, "With a bumper I stimulate my pen, yet I only succeed thereby in venting my excited feelings and, as I thus commit my thoughts to writing, truly I am an object worthy of commiseration. Alas! I am but the bird that, dreading the winter frost, finds no shelter in the tree; the autumn insect that chirps to the moon, and hugs the door for warmth. For where are they who know me?"

The title P'u gave to his collection of stories is *Liao Chai*, so that he made use of the fanciful name he gave his study—the "something to fall back upon in old age"—but, when he found the work could not be published, the title must have seemed to him a mockery.

The *Liao Chai* is full of weird tales. Some tell only of curious facts; as, for instance, of a man who had twelve frogs in a box, each of which would sing when touched on the head with a tiny wand. Each frog sang a different note so that the man could make them sing a tune "in perfect time and harmony", like music played on bells. Another was of performing mice who, dressed in costumes, acted simple plays, exhibiting such emotions as anger and joy.

Many of the stories have the flavour of *Æsop's Fables*. One is about a tiger who ate the son of an old woman who depended on him for her livelihood. She complained to the magistrate, who promised to arrest the tiger. A policeman was ordered to carry out the arrest and, not relishing the job, he went to a temple to pray for courage. The tiger walked into the temple and, obligingly, allowed itself to be bound and carried before the magistrate; who, thereupon, explained to the beast that if it could provide for

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the old woman, as her son had done, it would be pardoned. The tiger nodded its head in agreement and was released. Next morning there was a dead deer on the old woman's doorstep. The tiger was so lavish with such gifts, which arrived regularly morning after morning, that the woman was able to sell them, and became much better off than she would have been had she been cared for by a human son. When, at last, she died, the tiger "roared like a thunder-peal" and disappeared.

P'u is fond of fabulous monsters like sea-serpents, a hill-spirit with a face three feet long, ghosts and dwarfs, and a flying cow. Metamorphosis is common; a man turns into a crow, a woman into a rat, and beautiful girls change into foxes. These fox-girls turn up suddenly from nowhere, usually bringing gifts of money or jewels, and they ensnare young men. Just as a youth thinks he is going to be married happily to one of these girls, she turns into a fox and disappears.

It is not surprising that P'u tells many tales of corrupt officials, wicked scholars and unlucky students who fail to obtain their master's degree.

No one knows when P'u died, but there is a footnote to one story which mentions a severe earthquake in the year 1696. Only one house in the town was uninjured—a house inhabited by a filial son. P'u observes, "and thus, when in the crash of a collapsing universe, filial piety is specially marked out for protection, who shall say that God Almighty does not know black from white?"

At the time of this earthquake P'u was seventy-five years old. It must have seemed to him that his life was a failure. He was poor and his main work, the *Liao Chai*, had not been published. True, the manuscript was handed round amongst his friends, who enjoyed the stories and praised the style, but outside this limited circle it had no success. As was said much later by a friendly reader, to offer such work to "schoolmen" was "like talking of ice to a butterfly".

P'u died years before his book was published. But since the first edition there have been many; the standard one being in sixteen volumes, totalling more than two thousand five hundred pages.

The *Liao Chai* set a new fashion in Chinese literature. Its value



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is mainly in its style, for P'u wrote with an extreme economy of words. Every word is necessary and shows the careful choice of a master writer. Moreover, P'u knew the literature of his country thoroughly and made good use of classical allusion and quotation. It has been said that this curious book, with its wealth of fantastic stories, "is a work which for purity and beauty of style is now universally accepted in China as the best and most perfect model". Apart from its value as a work of art, "its purpose is to glorify virtue and censure vice". It is, "a book calculated to elevate mankind".

Several western writers have translated stories from the *Liao Chai* into English and a collection of one hundred and sixty-four has been published under the title *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*.

It is not known who wrote the early Chinese novels, because the first writers bold enough to branch out into this form of literature did not dare to let their names be known, but wrote anonymously or under assumed names. When novels began to appear they were read eagerly and, it is said, even scholars enjoyed them surreptitiously, though pretending to know nothing about them.

As late as 1776 a Chinese scholar listed all the kinds of writing in literature, such as essays, poetry, epigrams and histories, but he made no mention of any form of fiction, because fiction was still considered unworthy.

## CHÈNG CH'ENG-KUNG

### THE PIRATE'S SON

(A.D. 1624-1662)

EARLY in the seventeenth century, a youth named Chêng, from a fishing village on the south-east coast of China, left his poverty-stricken home in search of a livelihood. He went first to Macao, then to the Philippine Islands and then to Japan. There he found work and, in due course, a Japanese wife.

The Chêngs had several children and, in the year 1624, a son was born, to whom they gave the personal name Ch'êng-Kung.

Not long afterwards, Chêng was entrusted by his employer with a valuable cargo of merchandise, to be sold at the Chinese port of Amoy. He was an unscrupulous man and, having sold this shipload of goods, remained in China using his master's money to establish himself in business as a pirate.

Chêng bought several junks and sailed up and down the coast, capturing merchantmen and plundering fishing villages. This part of the coast of China, in the province of Fukien, is shut off from the interior by ranges of mountains; and its rocky shores, creeks and islands favoured piracy, so that Chêng was able to build up a considerable pirate fleet and, before very long, became "the terror of the seas".

The ruling emperor, unable to stop Chêng's depredations, tried appeasement. He made the pirate an admiral. Chêng found this very convenient; the two jobs worked so well together. As an admiral he could live respectably in Amoy and chase himself without ever getting caught; and as a pirate he could attack a ship of the admiral's command and meet only a show of resistance. In the name of the emperor he forced fishermen into his crews, while in the name of Chêng he plundered their villages. The scheme worked so satisfactorily that within a few years Chêng owned hundreds of trading junks and was known and feared on all the coasts that fringe the great China Sea.

The honour of being an admiral, and the wealth of a pirate, encouraged Chêng to become respectable and he decided to settle

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down. He sent for his son, Ch'êng-Kung, now seven years old. The boy's Japanese mother had trained him well, teaching him to read and write, but already he showed his father's devil-may-care spirit and a violent temper. He showed, too, a quick interest in ships and piracy, but, for the time being, these interests had to be put aside. It was only proper that an admiral's son should go to school.

Ch'êng-Kung was exceptionally clever. He mastered *The Thousand Character Essay* while boys of his age were still struggling with *The Three Character Classic*, and he soon knew by heart *The Classic of Filial Piety*. Indeed, the admiral's son made such rapid progress that at the very early age of fifteen he took his first degree in the competitive examinations, a brilliant feat which won widespread fame.

At this time China was undergoing one of her dynastic changes. After the great T'ang and Sung Dynasties, the Mongols overran China and for more than one hundred and fifty years their princes occupied the throne. The Mongols were followed by a pure Chinese dynasty, the Mings; but in Chêng's day another "barbarian" race from the north, the Manchus, were in process of conquering China.

The Manchus wore their hair in queues and, when they drove out the Mings, they ordered all Chinese men to adopt this fashion, as a sign of submission. Many Chinese refused and were put to death for their disobedience. In the south there was prolonged resistance and a Ming prince still ruled the isolated province of Fukien and parts of the adjacent coast.

This Ming prince was so impressed with the scholarship of Ch'êng-Kung and, perhaps, so anxious to keep the support of his wealthy father that he rewarded the young man by giving him his own surname and appointing him Assistant Controller of the Imperial Clan Court. Ch'êng-Kung was known, henceforth, as Lord-of-the-Royal-Surname, which in the Amoy dialect is Kox Sing-ia. This was turned by Europeans into Koxinga, a name by which Ch'êng-Kung is known widely in Western countries.

Although the Manchus had overrun most of China, they were not a numerous people and it was by no means certain they would be able to hold their gains. The admiral supported the Mings, but he was ambitious. He knew the Manchus were poor

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sailors and still poorer scholars. He had a great fleet and a clever son. With his help the Mings might win back China; without it their chances were weak. Why should not his son, Lord-of-the-Royal-Surname, become in fact royal? From pirate to admiral had not been such a very difficult voyage, even if it was bloody; why not from admiral's son to Son of Heaven?

So the admiral asked the Ming prince to adopt Ch'êng-Kung as Heir Apparent. The idea was not fantastic. Had not the first Ming emperor been a beggar boy? But although the Mings had almost lost their empire, they were proud and not disposed to remember the humble origin of the founder of their dynasty. The admiral's suggestion was refused.

From that moment he lost interest in the future of the Mings and began to look with favour upon their rivals. While the admiral was thus cooling off from the Mings and warming up to the Manchus, his son worked out a military plan to strengthen the position of the Ming court and was rewarded with the rank of earl and given command of a small Ming force to guard an important mountain pass.

His father, now secretly supporting the Manchus, played him a shabby trick. Just when a Manchu army was approaching he cut off his son's supplies, so that the young earl was forced to return to headquarters, leaving the pass unguarded long enough for the Manchus to march through unmolested.

When Ch'êng-Kung realised that his father was actively supporting the Manchus, he tried to dissuade him and, failing, fled to the neighbourhood of Amoy, and there raised his own army in the Ming cause.

The Manchus knew the admiral's power and welcomed him warmly—but they did not trust him. Instead they flattered him and, when his caution was allayed, invited him to visit the emperor in the new capital at Peking. The admiral accepted this gracious invitation from his new sovereign, and sailed right into the trap. As soon as he reached Peking he was arrested and thrown into prison.

Although the admiral betrayed his son, Ch'êng-Kung was infuriated by this Manchu treachery. Taking command of his father's great fleet he sailed to the Pescadore Islands, off the coast of Formosa, and established a secure base. Meanwhile the

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Manchu troops made such headway in the mountains of Fukien that the Ming prince was obliged to move south to Canton.

At first Ch'êng-Kung was content to sail up and down the coast, harassing the Manchus wherever he could and resuming his father's old trade of piracy when it suited him to do so. His crews were a mixed lot; mostly hardy seamen who lived for loot, thought nothing of pillage or murder and were unmoved by cruelty. Some were fugitives who refused to be reconciled with the Manchus and, driven from the land, sought refuge with the pirate fleet; others were unfortunate men who fell amongst the pirates, as it were by fate, and made shift to endure the hard life.

Ch'êng-Kung ruled this rough and very numerous following with inflexible discipline. He rewarded merit, and punished disobedience with immediate execution, or far less immediate torture. His scholar-trained mind worked out plans in great detail so that he was independent of his captains. He was not unpopular; for the fugitives shared his hatred of Manchus and reckoned him a patriot, while the rest admired his daring even if they feared his temper; and all knew that if they were killed he would provide generously for their families.

When Ch'êng-Kung had a sure base for his fleet he began a rebellion on the mainland. He occupied some towns and, learning that a Ming ruler was enthroned in Canton, sent him a message of loyalty, for which he was promoted to marquis, and later to duke. For a year or two he met with some success, but was then defeated by a Manchu army and obliged to fall back on Amoy. It happened that one of his cousins was at Amoy, in command of a force of soldiers. Ch'êng-Kung made good his own loss in men by murdering this cousin and then taking over his troops.

Next year Ch'êng-Kung was ordered to attempt the rescue of the Ming governor-general. He left an uncle in charge of Amoy, but in his absence the Manchus seized some of his property near the port. Ch'êng-Kung was so furious that he returned to Amoy and executed his uncle.

He was firmly established around Amoy when, in the year 1654, a certain Italian priest, named Vittorio Ricci, came there to preach the Christian faith. Ch'êng-Kung allowed Ricci to build a mission and from the priest we learn that he lived in a simple manner, permitting no luxury in his home and keeping his

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household constantly at work. Perhaps he remembered, from the days of his scholarship, the saying of Confucius: "Those who do nothing all day but cram themselves with food and never use their minds are difficult. Are there not games such as draughts? To play them would surely be better than doing nothing at all."

The Manchus found it so difficult to dislodge Ch'êng-Kung that they offered him riches and honour if he would abandon the Mings. They forced his father, the old admiral, to send a message from prison, urging him to accept, but Ch'êng-Kung refused. The Mings, for their part, were so afraid of losing his support that they offered to make him a prince, and, when he declined the offer, sent a second offer, which, after some hesitation, he accepted.

But the Ming cause was practically a lost cause. There was still a good deal of rather futile opposition. A book appeared with the title, *The Ninety-Nine Ways of Destroying the Manchus*. One way suggested that the roads might be paved with sharp pointed stones, because the Manchus depended on their cavalry to keep order in the conquered territory. It was an absurd suggestion, for the Manchu horses were accustomed to wild country, and the official who sent a copy of the book to the Manchu emperor said, "It only merits the most profound disgust." Nevertheless the emperor ordered that "not a single character" of the book should be "saved from the burning". The Mings were defeated, but the Manchus were not yet established so firmly that they could ignore such propaganda; and, for all their success on land, they were impotent against Ch'êng-Kung at sea.

Ch'êng-Kung, thinking over these matters and fuming with rage at his father's imprisonment, formed a bold plan. Instead of carrying on petty warfare in the mountains and creeks of Fukien, he decided to strike at the very heart of the Manchu territory; not at Peking, but at the old Ming capital, Nanking—for Nanking was practically on the banks of the great Yangtse-kiang and could be assaulted with a fleet. He hoped that when Nanking fell the people everywhere would rise against the Manchus, and that he who had been known as Lord-of-the-Royal-Surname, the Ming surname, might be chosen emperor. It was his father's old ambition; but this time it did not depend on the favour of a prince but was to be decided by the sword.

Ricci, who watched the pirate's preparations, wrote:

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Never before or since was a more powerful and mighty fleet seen in the waters of this empire than that of Ch'êng-Kung, numbering more than three thousand junks, which he had ordered to rendezvous in the bays and rivers around Amoy. The sight of them inspired one with awe.

Many of these junks were small, but it is likely the larger vessels were as big as some of the ships which, at that time, Samuel Pepys, on the other side of the world, was cherishing for the Royal Navy. At least they "inspired with awe" the much-travelled Italian priest.

As this armada sailed splendidly along the six hundred miles of coast up to the Yangtse-kiang, other fleets joined it, for Ch'êng-Kung had garrisons and depots at many points, including an important island commanding the entrance to the great river.

For some reason Ch'êng-Kung hesitated before attacking Nanking, perhaps to synchronise with a popular rising of the Chinese within the city. It was an anxious time for the Manchu general; with a vast fleet, such as he had never seen, crowding the wide river outside the City walls and with unfriendly Chinese in all the country around.

Then, one night, scouts reported there was revelry aboard Ch'êng-Kung's ships, and the Manchu seized his chance to strike. River *sampans* and *wupans*, loaded with Manchu soldiers, put out silently in the darkness and boarded the pirates, setting fire to their ships, so that soon the river was ablaze with burning craft. The sounds of drunken carousal changed to the confused noise of hand-to-hand fighting, the crackle of burning timber, the crash of falling masts and the cries of wounded and dying. When the sun rose on the scene of this extraordinary battle, fought with a great fleet of ships two hundred miles from the open sea, no fewer than three thousand pirates were dead and hundreds of their vessels were smouldering hulks.

With this defeat went Ch'êng-Kung's chance of ever being anything but an adventurer. He returned to Amoy in a vile temper. Next year his father was taken from the prison in Peking and executed.

The Manchus were poor sailors but good strategists, and, knowing the advantage of following up a victory quickly, they

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equipped eight hundred junks and sent them to attack the pirate in his own waters. Ch'êng-Kung had no more than four hundred large ships left, but he knew all there was to know about the coast and the difficult currents around Amoy.

The two fleets met, and fought all through a June day. The clumsy-looking vessels, with their square-shaped sterns and patch-like sails, bore down upon one another in close formation, ramming, boarding, capturing, sinking and setting fire to each other, as skill and luck determined. The scorching midsummer sun tortured the wounded, but half-naked men fought on with swords and knives till decks were slippery with blood and the lovely sea was blotched with floating bodies.

At the beginning of the day each pirate ship was engaged with two or more of the enemy; by midday the contest was more equal; and, at the end of the sweltering afternoon, the remnants of the Manchu fleet were seeking narrow channels and creeks where they might be overlooked till night hid them from a merciless pursuit. Ch'êng-Kung remained master of the China Sea.

The next move of the Manchus was drastic. They ordered all the inhabitants of over eighty towns along the Fukien and adjacent coast to leave their homes and go ten miles or more inland. They built forts at intervals of three miles, each garrisoned with one hundred soldiers, to make sure the unfortunate people kept the command. This move has been criticised as wanton, but the withdrawal of all civilians from the coast did, in fact, inconvenience Ch'êng-Kung considerably. It was as brutal as burning crops or destroying towns to deny them to an enemy, but it was effective. Ch'êng-Kung now had a very insecure foothold on the mainland.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries traders and adventurers from various European countries settled in the Far East. The Portuguese were at Macao, the first slice of Chinese territory to fall into the hands of a Western Power. The Spaniards were in the Philippine Islands, and the Dutch in Malacca and Formosa.

When the Dutch saw Ch'êng-Kung almost driven from the coast of China, they wondered what this formidable man would do. It was likely he would look covetously on their colony of Formosa, an island a little larger than Holland and only one



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hundred and fifty miles from Amoy. They sent him a message asking him to deny rumours that he had any such intention. He replied contemptuously:

I have of late years been so deeply involved in a war with Manchus that I have had no leisure to trouble my head with an inconsiderable island that produces nothing but grass. It not being my custom to disclose my designs, but rather, if I am in the east to point to the west, how can you suppose to be informed of them by rumours?

When Ch'êng-Kung sent this comfortless reply to the anxious Dutch he had no plan of attacking Formosa, though doubtless the idea had occurred to him. His course was soon determined by an odd chance.

In the employ of the Dutch Governor of Formosa was a dishonest Chinese accountant, named Ho Pin. This man embezzled a large sum and was faced with early discovery. He could not leave the island and saw no way of paying back the stolen money. When he heard the common gossip about Ch'êng-Kung he realised that if Formosa was invaded his theft could be covered in the general confusion. Catastrophe to his comrades might be salvation for him.

Thereupon, Ho Pin sent a messenger secretly to Amoy, urging Ch'êng-Kung to invade Formosa and offering him a detailed map of the island. At first the pirate did not seem interested, but "after great hesitation" agreed. His hold on the coast around Amoy was precarious, and though to be king of an island "that produces nothing better than grass" was a poor alternative to being the Son of Heaven, it was better than nothing; and, besides, might be a stepping-stone to something bigger.

Ch'êng-Kung made his preparations quietly, but the Dutch were still suspicious. They sent a naval squadron from Malacca under an admiral, nicknamed "Headstrong John". Like many of the European seamen of that age, "Headstrong John" was a fortune-seeking adventurer, and he soon grew tired of waiting in Formosa for something to happen. He decided to leave the island and have a crack at the Portuguese in Macao.

So "Headstrong John" sailed away on April the tenth, in the

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year 1661, and twenty days later Ch'êng-Kung landed a large army. Ricci says the pirate had five hundred first-class ships with forty thousand men. He soon captured all the small Dutch ports, but the main settlement, Zeelandia, held out for nine months. In the fighting on Formosa Ch'êng-Kung behaved brutally, slaying and burning ruthlessly and killing his prisoners.

Having annihilated the Dutch, Ch'êng-Kung decided to tackle another European power. He brought Ricci from Amoy and forced him to act as envoy to the Spanish Governor of the Philippines. His letter to the Spaniard began with news of his victory over the Dutch:

I being highly provoked in the year 1661 in the fourth moon, the fury of my anger swelling, set out a fleet to chastise their crimes, and coming to their forts slew innumerable multitudes of them, the Hollanders having no way left to fly or get off, and, naked, humbly begged they might be our subjects. . . . Now your little or mean kingdom has wronged and oppressed my subjects. . . . I have hundreds of thousands of able soldiers, abundance of ships of war. . . . The way to your kingdom by water is very short, so that setting out in the morning we may come to it at night.

He offered to pardon the Spaniards if they would pay him tribute.

This was an unpleasant letter for the Italian priest to carry to his fellow Europeans, but he dared not refuse. For eight years Ricci had been living, as it were, under Ch'êng-Kung's wing and there was no lack of experience behind his description of the man as "this dreadful and formidable monster of the land and sea". Ricci went to the Spaniards uncertain how they would receive him and terrified at the prospect of returning with a defiant answer. Fortunately for him, Ch'êng-Kung's days were numbered.

He was still comparatively young but he dreaded assassination. So many men had heavy scores against him. He shifted his quarters frequently, suffered no stranger to come within dagger's reach and, when he went to bed at night, would not lie down but walked uneasily about his room.

Yet with all precautions Ch'êng-Kung could not live to be forty. No one murdered him, he did not die of disease, nor did

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he fall fighting. He was the victim of his own unchecked passion.

The immediate cause of his fatal outburst is uncertain, but it seems likely that it was a false report of the way his envoy was received by the Spaniards. The record of Father Ricci may be coloured too highly, but it was written at the time and by one who knew the man well:

The proud pirate was infuriated on hearing such dreadful news, the pupils of his eyes suddenly turned to fierce balls of fire; and convulsively seizing the handle of his sword, ordered all his forces to be got ready to sail to the Philippines. . . . This sudden burst of terrible anger so affected the robust constitution of the pirate that a few hours after he was attacked by an appalling and fearful madness. In his terrible frenzy he tore his flesh, bit through his lips and tongue, furiously attacked anyone who went near him, passed sentence of death upon the King and Governors of Spain. Five days passed without any alteration of these terrible symptoms until, suffocated by rage, he delivered up his perverted soul to the demons.

Time plays tricks with a man's reputation. Thirteen years after the death of Ch'êng-Kung, a Manchu emperor allowed the Chinese to erect a temple in his honour. His admirers, forgetting his cruelty and remembering his warfare against the Manchus, counted him a patriot; while the Manchus, once they were firmly established, forgave his resistance because he had driven the Dutch from Formosa, and so brought that great island within the Chinese empire.

The early Manchu emperors ruled China well, but by the middle of the nineteenth century many Chinese despised them as alien rulers and were inclined to make heroes of the Mings and of those who supported them. A large portrait of Ch'êng-Kung was displayed in a village close to his tomb. The picture showed him dressed as a literary graduate; an unintentional reminder that a scholar may degenerate into a very ungente man.

In a short time the "barbarian" Manchus were tamed and, largely, civilised by the Chinese; but during the next two hundred and fifty years the "barbarians" of the West came in increasing numbers and with increasing power and refused to be civilised.

## CHIA CH'ING

### THE THRIFTY EMPEROR

(A.D. 1760-1820)

IN the year 1785, an unusual banquet took place in the palace at Peking. The great court-yard was dotted with seven hundred and fifty low tables; round each table were four mats and on every mat sat an old man: three thousand ancients come from all parts of China, at the invitation of one of the most famous emperors, Ch'ien-Lung.

It was the emperor's seventy-fifth birthday; his reign had lasted fifty years and he was blessed with many sons, grandsons and, even, great-grandsons. To mark his age, and to show-off his many children, Ch'ien-Lung invited to this party all the heads of families who had seen five generations of descendants.

On ordinary occasions, anyone coming into the presence of the Son of Heaven had to kowtow and remain kneeling, but the old men were not required to do so at this party. Instead, when the emperor arrived, attended by his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons, the three thousand guests struggled stiffly to their feet, like an army of awkward recruits doing their first drill. When they were again seated, attendants served a grand dinner of roast duck, chicken, pork, mutton with sauce, birds'-nests, sharks'-fins and pigeons' eggs.

The royal sons, grandsons and great-grandsons moved from table to table, urging the guests to eat and drink much more than could have been comfortable for old digestions. The emperor, they declared, wanted every dish to be emptied. The wine, they assured their company, was the very vintage that His Majesty drank. Each guest was invited to take home the little porcelain cup in which his wine was served; so that in future, when he drank from it, he would recall this Palace feast and its purport.

After the meal there was an entertainment with instrumental music, singing by a choir of court eunuchs, and then a play about the honour due to old age. All the actors wore masks both before

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and behind, so that they never seemed to turn their backs on the emperor or his guests.

The play was followed by the reading of a poem written by the emperor, "To the Venerable Old Men who have been Bidden to this Feast," and permission was given to every guest to erect outside the gate of his home a tablet inscribed with these Imperial verses.

Before the party broke up, ministers and officials distributed presents: purses embroidered in gold or silver, lengths of silk, staffs decorated with dragons' heads, sceptres inlaid with jade replicas of the character meaning "long life". The emperor himself handed the gifts to those of his guests who were more than one hundred years old.

The party must have cost the Treasury a pretty penny, but Ch'ien-Lung never spared expense and, although a Manchu, was showing in this birthday celebration a respect for old age that was typically Chinese. The Manchus had been ruling China for almost one hundred and fifty years and they had adopted many Chinese customs, to which they were inclined to cling even more tenaciously than Chinese rulers would have done.

Ch'ien-Lung was especially careful to observe all the rites of filial piety. He honoured old men, frequently praised his own departed ancestors and was most dutiful to his mother. Every Chinese knew the story of Old Lai-tzū, which is one of the twenty-four classic examples of filial piety. It is said that when Lai-tzū was eighty years old his parents were still living. In order that they should forget their great age, Old Lai-tzū used to play before them like a child. The Emperor Ch'ien-Lung, in his middle age, invited his mother to a theatrical performance and himself came on the stage made up as the eighty-years-old Lai-tzū. He crawled about like a child of four, played with a toy drum and two balls on a string, danced and jumped and made childish noises, till his mother realised he was enacting the famous story of filial piety in her honour.

Almost all those who thronged the palace court-yard at Ch'ien-Lung's birthday party were, to use a Chinese phrase, "approaching the wood"; that is, the wood of their coffins. The exceptions were the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of the emperor, and the ministers and attendants, some of whom had

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lengthy parts yet to play on the stage of life. Amongst these were three who were destined to perform a little tragedy of their own—the emperor's fifth son, later known as Chia Ch'ing; a minister named Ho Shên, and his son.

Chia Ch'ing, at the age of thirteen, knew by heart the five classics, could compose poems in imitation of ancient and modern styles and write long essays on historical subjects. He was an apt pupil, studious and docile, and he accepted without question his father's maxim, "diligence is the secret of good work; play a mere waste of energy". These qualities made him his father's favourite.

The Chinese, like other people, are not always logical. Once in the eleventh century, a very clever boy beat his elder brother in the official examinations. The emperor of that time said it would never do for his name to appear in the examination results above that of an elder brother, and he ordered the clever boy to be placed tenth instead of first. But this preference for age was often disregarded when it came to selecting an Heir Apparent for the Dragon Throne, and Ch'ien-Lung, pleased with the diligence and seriousness of his fifth son, secretly named him Heir Apparent. He did not tell the boy but kept the decision absolutely secret, locked in a gold casket, in accordance with a very old dynastic rule.

Chia Ch'ing continued his studies with his brothers and was treated in every respect like them. At five o'clock each morning the princes went to their study and remained at work till five in the afternoon. They had to master their own Manchu language and Chinese, and were expected to know something of Mongolian and Tibetan.

When Chia Ch'ing was fifteen, a handsome young man, rather too serious, respectful to his elders and artlessly attentive to his father, he came into conflict with the minister Ho Shên and his son. All three were with the emperor at Jehol, enjoying a hunting holiday.

Ch'ien-Lung was a good shot and, to test his son, he pointed to some deer grazing at the verge of the Garden of Ten Thousand Trees and asked Chia Ch'ing if he could shoot one of the creatures through the head. The young prince had not neglected the essential sport of archery and his first arrow hit the mark. The delighted father rewarded his son with a gold-mounted saddle.

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Then the son of Ho Shên came forward and begged to be allowed to show his skill. He boasted that he could not only hit the head of a deer but would pierce the beast's eye.

The emperor, who was often impetuous, gave his consent, and promised the youth that if he succeeded he should marry the tenth princess, his favourite daughter, who happened to be with the party. Ho Shên had an extraordinary influence over the great emperor but he had not dared to think of his son marrying into the royal family. No wonder he held his breath as the lad took aim! The deer fell and, when its carcass was brought to the emperor, the arrow was found sticking in the beast's eye.

Chia Ch'ing congratulated his rival, but the incident gave him a vague feeling of distrust of his father's minister. It was more than the jealousy of a boy who has been outshone by a playmate. It was presumptuous for the minister's son to push himself forward at the moment of the prince's success; and the emperor's encouragement and the extravagant reward all showed how far Ho Shên, a man of low birth, had gained control over the emperor. As Chia Ch'ing formally praised the bowmanship of his future brother-in-law, he may have remembered the old saying, *His father split firewood; his son cannot carry a lily.*

No one at this time knew that Chia Ch'ing had been named Heir Apparent; and as he was only the fifth son, and, moreover, not the son of an empress but of a concubine, his chance of ever being emperor seemed remote. For years he went on with his studies, never wasting time, and performing, with due solemnity the part of a junior prince in the many ceremonies of the Manchu court. The Court History says of this period:

He stayed in his study all day long investigating the origin of government, the reasons for failure and success in ancient and recent times. He had to look up many references and worked hard through both the heat of summer and the cold of winter, till he made himself thoroughly familiar with the policies of the last three thousand years. The apartment he occupied was divided into five sections. All were filled with books.

Ch'ien-Lung was so pleased with his son's studious ways that he had a pillar of the prince's room inscribed, "The study where the

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crane alights on the pine"; an allegory meaning that immortal wisdom was brought to Chia Ch'ing on the wings of a heavenly messenger.

At the age of thirty Chia Ch'ing was created Admirable Prince of the First Order; and when, a little later, he was made Governor of Peking, courtiers whispered to each other knowingly that the emperor's fifth son must be destined for the highest honour.

When Chia Ch'ing was thirty-five, Ch'ien-Lung called an assembly of princes, nobles and ministers in the Hall of Diligence in State Affairs and publicly proclaimed him Heir Apparent. He was raised above all his brothers and his wife became the first woman in the state.

Chia Ch'ing moved into a palace set aside for the heir to the throne. He was given extra guards, including six Tiger Halberdiers and eight Leopard Tail Archers. Two outriders announced his approach wherever he went. His monthly allowance was doubled and his wife's carriage, which had been coloured green, was repainted in the imperial colour, yellow.

Ch'ien-Lung, who was now over eighty, decided to abdicate. His grandfather had reigned for sixty years and Ch'ien-Lung once said, "If I were granted as long a life as that of my sainted grandfather, I would retire from active government after sixty years, not daring to reign longer than he."

The emperor was still hale and, before abdicating, he made an unexpected overhaul of government offices. He discovered much dishonesty and graft. Public money was being used to finance private business; army generals reported inspections that had never been made; provincial governors connived at the activities of pirates and bandits, in return for a share in their spoils; and the giving and taking of bribes was widespread. What the emperor failed to discover was that the worst offender, the arch-scoundrel who for years had been amassing a vast fortune by corrupt practices, was none other than his favourite minister. The evil-doers caught and punished by Ch'ien-Lung were trivial offenders compared with the powerful Ho Shên.

The old emperor warned the small fry, without realising that at his side was a great whale who had grown fat by a shameless exploitation of the people. "The majority of the governors," thundered the emperor, "have grown careless, thinking that next



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year when I retire is not far off. Yet let them make no mistake. My successor has been trained by me from morning till evening. He will be every whit as painstaking as I have been." Little did Ch'ien-Lung, or his favourite minister, realise how painstaking Chia Ch'ing could be, nor who would be the first to feel the effects of his pains!

After this ineffectual cleansing of the administration, Ch'ien-Lung gave himself the title, Supremely Exalted Sovereign Lord, and, in theory, left the Dragon Throne to Chia Ch'ing.

As a matter of form, the princes, nobles and ministers begged Ch'ien-Lung to reconsider his decision, using such extravagant phrases as, "you are exalted like the Sun and Moon and revered like a father and mother". Chia Ch'ing, also as a matter of form, protested that he was quite unfit to follow such an exalted ruler. He declared, "Though I have studied hard from childhood upwards my knowledge is too shallow, my ability too small, my experience too limited to fit me for the stupendous task." All of which was true, but it was said in filial duty, and not intended to be taken seriously.

So Chia Ch'ing came to the throne; but his father made it clear that he was not relinquishing all power. "I shall keep fully informed of state affairs and instruct my successor in the art of governing," he said. "He will handle the reports, but they are to be submitted to me first."

For the next three years Chia Ch'ing performed the ceremonies expected of an emperor. In the spring he ploughed a few furrows in the sacred field of a temple dedicated to the First Ploughman. This rite had been performed by Chinese emperors from time immemorial; an echo, as it were, of the far distant days when the Son of Heaven was half-priest, half-ruler and, as such, blessed the work of husbandry. Likewise, at the time of the winter solstice, Chia Ch'ing fasted and offered sacrifice on the white marble Altar of Heaven in thankfulness for the resurgence of the active powers in Nature.

These and other ceremonies were performed with a grave solemnity which everyone admired; but in practical affairs of state it was the "abdicated" emperor, Ch'ien-Lung, who occupied the throne which faced south, and his favourite, Ho Shên, who decided what should be done. Chia Ch'ing, approaching the age

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of forty, was considered too young to have an opinion. In the council chamber he sat on a stool facing west, and listened in obedient silence, while his old father consulted the old minister. A proverb says, *He who does not listen to the advice of an old man faces calamity*, but this was going too far! Indeed, the all-powerful Ho Shên was now the real ruler of China.

Perhaps, as Chia Ch'ing sat on his stool facing west, his mind may have wandered back sometimes to the days of his youth—to the archery incident at Jehol, when Ho Shên's presumptuous son stole his honours and won his sister in marriage. Perhaps he was really as attentive as he seemed, and his alert mind detected self-interest in the advice Ho Shên offered, so freely, to Ch'ien-Lung. Certainly Chia Ch'ing grew to hate the powerful minister.

Early in the year 1799, Ch'ien-Lung died. His long reign was of the kind that men are apt to describe as "glorious". He had conquered "barbarian" neighbours and made the bounds of the Chinese empire wider still and wider. It had been an age of prosperity and internal peace, so that men thought of him as "a great ruler" and took it for granted that as long as he ruled all was well.

With the death of Ch'ien-Lung a new epoch began. It was as though the ship of state, after a long stay in port, weighed anchor and the crew asked "whither now?" In fact, though none guessed it, the anchor had been dragging for some time and the empire inherited by Chia Ch'ing was in a dangerous condition. It might be saved, but only by an exceptionally able captain.

Chia Ch'ing's first act has been described by a Chinese historian as "a stroke of brilliant statesmanship". He arrested Ho Shên and his son.

Like many a political scoundrel the minister was both clever and efficient, but self-seeking. Under torture, he disclosed the whereabouts of his ill-gotten fortune. It included some queer items, such as two thousand three hundred jewelled snuff-boxes, one hundred and forty gold and enamel watches and nine thousand sceptres of solid gold. Its value was estimated at seventy million pounds sterling—a treasure that was damning evidence of gross corruption, the constant acceptance of bribes and the sale of public appointments.

No defence was possible and Chia Ch'ing confiscated the treasure and sent Ho Shên the length of silk; a well-understood

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sentence. He was spared public execution but must hang himself forthwith. By Chinese custom the criminal's son should have perished too, but the lucky arrow that pierced the eye of a deer, so many years before, had made Ho Shên's son the emperor's brother-in-law and it was not fitting he should die. He was, however, deprived of his rank and all honours. Thus Chia Ch'ing had his revenge.

Looking round his empire Chia Ch'ing saw much amiss. The Manchu soldiers had become soft with the luxuries of peace, and were ill-disciplined. The generals were slack, allowing their men to loot and plunder. In three provinces discontented men were actually in revolt. Many officials owed their places to bribes given to Ho Shên or his corrupt underlings, and these sought to reimburse themselves by over-taxing the people. Pirates were still active along the coast. The Treasury was seriously short of money, partly because of Ch'ien-Lung's lavish expenditure and partly because so much of the tax money found its way into the deep purses of self-seeking tax collectors.

These evils within the empire might be overcome, but if Chia Ch'ing had looked beyond China, to the European adventurers and traders established in India and Malaya, and, beyond them, to the continent of Europe, he would have seen cause for grave alarm. The "barbarians" of Europe had stumbled upon a new kind of thinking, a thinking based on the new idea of analysis—something quite different from the wisdom of the sages of China. And this scientific approach to practical matters was beginning to give the "barbarians" more powerful weapons of war, bigger and faster ships. But the painstaking Chia Ch'ing was not the man to look so far; and, as yet, China saw no threat from without.

The seizure of Ho Shên's loot helped the imperial finances considerably, but Chia Ch'ing decided his most urgent problem was to balance the budget. "I have always endeavoured to practise thrift," he said. With astonishing patience he examined the accounts of even the most trivial public expenditure.

When he was going to a distant palace he ordered that the rooms should be cleaned but not in any way decorated, "decoration being merely a foolish squandering of funds". He restricted the number of silk dresses allowed the empress and even suggested his ministers should wear cotton.

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The emperor forced his zeal for economy on the members of his family. It was usual, when a child first went to school, for his near relatives to give him some little present, a slab of ink, a set of pen-brushes or a hand-rest. When one of Chia Ch'ing's five sons began his schooling, a prince sent the boy a gift fashioned in jade. The emperor was horrified. Such extravagance! He rebuked the prince publicly and threatened that if anyone else was discovered "secretly sending each other costly presents, they shall, without exception, be severely punished".

Year by year the painstaking emperor cut down expenditure in a hundred small ways. Ho Shên had made a fortune by accepting bribes from men who wanted civil service jobs, and it struck Chia Ch'ing that this flow of money might be diverted to the Treasury. It would certainly go a long way towards his laudable aim of balancing the budget. What did not occur to Chia Ch'ing was that men who bought their appointments, even when they bought them openly from the state, had to reimburse themselves by the same corrupt methods that undermined the state in Ho Shên's day.

Notwithstanding the corruption of the official class, China, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was the most civilised of all countries. There were more books in China than in all the rest of the world and the Chinese had good reason to feel superior to other nations.

Soon after Chia Ch'ing had been made Admirable Prince, his father had received an embassy from King George the Third of England. The emperor treated these foreigners courteously, but sent them back with a message which included the remarkable claim, "our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated into every country under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea". This was an exaggeration, but the Chinese government did, in fact, have a Department for Tributary States and received regular tribute from such countries as Nepal in India, Burma and Korea. To the Chinese these neighbouring states seemed more important than England, or any other remote country of which they had scant knowledge.

Chia Ch'ing, though distressed by his finances, had no reason to feel any less superior towards the "barbarians" of Europe than did his father; and when, in the year 1816, he was informed that a second English embassy had arrived, he was distinctly annoyed.

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No doubt they brought tribute gifts, but he would have to send expensive presents in return and provide a banquet and some entertainment, all of which ran away with money at the very time when he was trying so hard to get his budget to balance. It was vexatious.

The irritable monarch asked his ministers why this embassy had come to China. Did not his father tell the earlier embassy quite plainly that China "had no use" for English goods and no desire to increase her trade with barbarians? The ministers could only tell Chia Ch'ing the answer given by the English; which was that they brought greetings from the Regent of England and news of the defeat of Napoleon. It is doubtful if Chia Ch'ing had ever heard of Napoleon, and certain that his defeat meant nothing at all to China.

The embassy, led by Lord Amherst, consisted of seventy-five persons and it was accompanied by a whole squadron of the Royal Navy. Its sole purpose was to obtain more favourable trading conditions, but it is hardly surprising that the Chinese suspected some deeper motive; perhaps a naval reconnaissance.

About the year 320 B.C., Mencius visited the king of a Chinese state, who said to him, "You are an old man, yet you have not shrunk from a journey of a thousand *li* in order to come hither. Doubtless you have something on your mind which will profit my kingdom?" The sage replied, "Why must your Majesty use that word profit? My business is with benevolence and righteousness and nothing else." And Confucius said, "Wealth and honour are things that men desire, but if such desire cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should not be obtained." It is only recently that the Chinese government has taken any interest in trade. The officials of Chia Ch'ing, steeped in the teaching of Confucius and Mencius, considered the mere desire for trade a very inadequate explanation for so large a number of foreigners to come so far.

Chia Ch'ing gave orders that the embassy be detained until he was ready to grant an audience. Meanwhile they must be taught how to kowtow correctly, and their ships must remain at a nearby port, so that the Treasury would not have the expense of sending the embassy back overland to Canton.

Kowtow means literally "to knock the head". In practice it

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consisted of three bows and nine prostrations, or three times kneeling and nine "knockings", in which the performer touched his forehead lightly on the ground. It should be done gracefully, with dignity and without unseemly haste. In China everyone, including members of the royal family, made a kowtow when coming into the presence of the emperor; and the emperor himself, as Son of Heaven, when interceding for his people with the Supreme Spirits, first performed the kowtow. To the Chinese the kowtow was natural and hallowed by ancient custom, but to the English it seemed servile.

When Chia Ch'ing's ministers reported that the English refused to kowtow, but were willing to go down on one knee and make a low bow, as in the presence of their own sovereign, he was furious. It had been made clear to these barbarians that they were not wanted in China; if they insisted on coming they must, at least, act as though they were civilised and perform the usual ceremonies. Why should the Son of Heaven, in the presence of his whole court, suffer the insult of being approached by unwanted barbarians in a manner determined by them and contrary to custom? If they would not kowtow let them return at once to their own country.

While Chia Ch'ing was sending his ministers angry little notes on this subject, news came that the English ships had sailed away, leaving the embassy to return overland. Nevertheless Chia Ch'ing was not altogether happy about sending away the embassy without an audience, and he announced that he would receive Lord Amherst at the Summer Palace on the seventh day of the seventh moon—provided, of course, that His Lordship had learned to kowtow. He sent a duke and the President of the Board of Rites to expound to the ignorant English the significance of the ancient ceremony. Surely, even barbarians could be taught a simple thing like the kowtow!

The Chinese duke spent several days in fruitless argument with the English, but as the seventh day drew near he grew confident that, when the great moment came, Lord Amherst would make some attempt to kowtow; ungainly, no doubt, but good enough to pass with a smile as a barbarian's best effort. So the duke gave orders for the embassy and its bulky baggage to proceed to Peking, while he hurried on ahead to give the emperor the best

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report possible—the English lord had been shown how to kowtow and at the audience there would be no failure to observe the due ceremony. The duke made this report in good faith for it was incredible to him that an ambassador could come half round the world and then ruin his mission over a mere detail of ceremony!

Meanwhile Lord Amherst refused to be hurried and his journey took longer than was expected. On the evening of the sixth day he was still riding in an English post-chaise, drawn by four Mongolian ponies, along rough roads in complete darkness. He reached the Summer Palace very tired and only just in time, for the seventh day was dawning. Ever since the sage emperors Yao and Shun, the rulers of China had held their audiences at dawn, a time when many Englishmen feel particularly unceremonious.

Lord Amherst had no idea the audience would take place so early. He clambered stiffly from his carriage, looking for rest and refreshment, and was told that the emperor, arrayed in the Dragon Robe, was about to take his place on the Dragon Throne. His Lordship protested that he was not wearing his best uniform and that the presents from England were far behind with the heavy luggage: he could not attend the audience at such short notice. When the Chinese duke remonstrated, Lord Amherst declared he was too exhausted to appear before the emperor.

The duke did not dare tell Chia Ch'ing the whole truth. First he reported that the embassy was delayed. Chia Ch'ing was patient and said he would wait. Then the duke reported that Lord Amherst had been taken ill with a gastric complaint and petitioned for a short delay. Chia Ch'ing was still patient and would wait longer. Next the duke informed His Majesty that the English lord was too ill to appear at all. Chia Ch'ing was sorry for his lordship and ordered an imperial physician to attend at the Englishman's lodgings. He also ordered that the other English envoys appear before him at once. Alas! all the Englishmen remained obstinate about the kowtow and the duke did not dare bring any of them into the Hall of Audience. In despair he reported that all the envoys were ill!

Chia Ch'ing was very put out, and when the imperial physician returned saying he found Lord Amherst in good health the emperor was furious. He described the affair as "unbounded insolence" and ordered the whole embassy to leave China at once.

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Lord Amherst and his party had to travel back through six provinces, a journey which took nearly three months, and thence home to England, their mission a complete failure.

Within a few days Chia Ch'ing, learning something of the truth, issued a mandate in which he declared that if he had been told of the hurried journey, and that Lord Amherst was really rather exhausted, he would have postponed the audience. He gave strict orders that the English were to be well treated on their journey to Canton and he sent them presents.

Chia Ch'ing's reign of twenty-five years was outwardly unimportant. He made no conquests and lost no territory. Year by year he reduced expenditure until, at last, the budget was balanced. But Chia Ch'ing overlooked the proverb, *You can't clap hands with one palm*. It was wise to cut down expenditure from the high level it reached in Ch'ien-Lung's reign, but what China needed was to be rid of self-seeking officials.

The emperor's zeal for economy made him unpopular with officials and his habit of working really hard at unimportant details and issuing fussy edicts, was not appreciated by his subjects. When his father, Ch'ien-Lung, gave a party to the old men of China he was doing something that endeared him to his people, whereas Chia Ch'ing went out of his way to avoid personal contacts. The precincts of his palace were sacred and must not be approached by ordinary mortals. "I have heard," he wrote angrily in an edict, "that outside the Gate of Noon market people, wishing to take a short cut, calmly walk across the court square and nobody stops them!" Even worse was to follow. One day, when the emperor was in the Court of the Ripples of Jade he was horrified to see a junior official approach. Apparently the junior official was horrified, too, and "hastily drew back". Then, a few minutes later, a gardener actually "appeared from the east and crossed over to the west". "By what right were these fellows there at all?" demanded the outraged monarch.

Chia Ch'ing died at the age of sixty, during a violent thunderstorm. Because he was unpopular, a rumour whispered that he was struck by lightning as a judgment from Heaven, but the fact is he had a seizure. In his last moments he worried about the welfare of his subjects. The banks of the Huang Ho, the yellow river that is called "China's sorrow", had again burst, causing



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disastrous floods and, as Chia Ch'ing lay dying, he pondered over this recurring trouble, for during his reign it had happened seventeen times. He never realised that the river conservancy officials, who had paid heavily for their appointments, made their profits from the repairs necessary after each flood. They were appointed to see that the river did not overflow, but it paid them much better to make sure that it did.

Chia Ch'ing was efficient in administration but lacked imagination. His sense of proportion was weak, so that sometimes he neglected essentials to toil at trivial details. The later Manchu rulers were degenerate; Chia Ch'ing was not. If his many edicts are full of platitudes, they are all very worthy platitudes.

Chia Ch'ing can hardly be blamed for his part in the absurd affair of Lord Amherst's embassy. Like other Manchu rulers, he was incurious about Western civilisation and too self-satisfied; but, it must be agreed, his English visitors were no better. Some idea of their ignorance and arrogance may be noted from the opinions of the Secretary to the Embassy. "Chinese literature," wrote the Englishman, "remains a cumbrous curiosity and a melancholy instance of the unprofitable employment of the human mind for a series of ages." He allowed that Confucius had "some merits", but is "not aware that either interest or instruction can be derived by Europeans from a perusal of his writings". As to Chinese art, this poor fellow declared it "failed to achieve good taste", and is "grotesque and uselessly laborious".

With such leaders the embassy was doomed to failure, and yet, strange to say, Chia Ch'ing himself suffered from the same incurable disease—a dull imagination. Once, when he was advised to reward some men who had quarried two remarkably large pieces of jade, Chia Ch'ing replied, "Things merely gratifying to the eyes and the ears have no appeal to me whatever." And this from the ruler of a people who coined a proverb, *If you have two loaves of bread, sell one and buy a lily!*

## TZŪ HSI

"OLD BUDDHA"

(A.D. 1835-1908)

HALF-WAY through the nineteenth century, the daughter of a not very important Manchu official hobbled through the Eastern Gate of Glory into the Forbidden City.

Her high black head-dress, which showed she was unmarried, had in the centre an orchid—for Orchid was the girl's name. The reason she hobbled was not because her feet had been bound to make them small—footbinding being a Chinese custom that the Manchus never copied—but simply because smart young Manchu ladies wore very high heels.

Orchid, who was seventeen, was dressed in a lavender gown, for the colour suited her; and, although it was fashionable to use rather elaborate make-up, she had no colour on her lips, knowing herself to be so beautiful that she needed none.

The Forbidden City was the very heart of the empire. Its grey brick walls, forty feet high and forty feet thick with a moat forty feet wide, enclosed one square mile in the centre of Peking. This compact little city was set in the middle of the Imperial City, which had purple-coloured walls; and the Imperial City was surrounded by the Tartar or Inner City, which had a wall fifty feet in height and nearly fifteen miles in circuit. To the south was yet a fourth walled city, known as the Chinese or Outer City.

When Orchid passed through the Eastern Gate of Glory she entered one of the strangest places in the world. The Forbidden City was the home of three thousand persons, only one of whom was a man. The emperor had his own palace. The empress and any important concubines had separate palaces, and there were magnificent buildings for about one hundred Manchu ladies of rank with their serving-maids. The rest of the inhabitants were eunuchs; nearly three thousand of them, acting as messengers, clerks, cooks, hairdressers and domestic servants.

None of the inmates of the Forbidden City might leave without permission, which was granted rarely. No one might enter

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except on official business, and even members of the royal family, who lived in the Imperial City, might not remain after nightfall.

Orchid was one of seventeen Manchu girls summoned to appear before the Emperor Hsien Fêng, in order that he might choose a concubine. The girls had been short-listed by a eunuch, named Li Lien-ying, and were to parade before the emperor and empress like mannequins at a modern dress show.

The girl chosen could look forward to a life of luxury, and some little importance at court. But she would have to give up family and friends and remain for the rest of her life within that one square mile. She would be lucky if she saw her parents again. Nevertheless every one of these girls cherished the hope that she might be chosen, for it was considered an honour to be one of the concubines of an emperor.

Orchid was engaged to be married to a young Manchu guardsman, named Jung Lu, but the glamour of court life and this chance of becoming powerful in the state was too good to be missed. She entered the audience hall hopefully, and when the eunuch Li called her name, she made a kowtow before Their Majesties without a trace of nervousness.

According to custom the emperor consulted his wife in this matter of taking a concubine, and the Empress, who was later known as the Dowager Empress Tzü An (which means "motherly and restful"), now sat beside him watching the seventeen aspirants, as they walked about the room pretending to admire works of art and the picture scrolls on the walls. From time to time Hsien Fêng turned to the empress for advice. She would bid the girl in question come closer and would study her features, or her hands; criticise her walk, or the way she kowtowed. Eunuchs served tea, and Their Majesties watched the young ladies taking polite sips from tiny porcelain cups and trying to appear unselfconscious.

When, at last, the chief eunuch announced, "The audience is ended, you may all go," the astute Orchid was sure of two things—that the emperor favoured her and that Tzü An did not! A few days later a procession of eunuchs arrived at Orchid's home with valuable presents for her parents, and with a magnificent sedan chair in which to carry the new concubine to the Forbidden City.

Orchid soon discovered that her royal master was a characterless young man, given to debauchery and very much under the

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control of eunuchs. Indeed, the eunuchs, who were supposed to be palace slaves, had become all-powerful. They controlled the entrance to the palace and admitted only those who bribed them adequately; they could ensure that a minister had quick access to the emperor or was kept waiting a weary time. They were always beside the emperor and influenced his decisions by subtle suggestions. They were filters through whom news of the outside world penetrated to the ruler.

It was not long before Orchid realised that the eunuch Li might be a valuable ally. He knew all that went on in the Forbidden City and, in various ways, picked up state secrets which he would disclose for a suitable fee. He could make or mar a reputation.

So powerful were the eunuchs in the Manchu court that only a very able and strong emperor could have controlled them, and all through the century no such emperor appeared.

It was said by the great sage Mencius, about the year 300 B.C., "Three things are unfilial and of these the worst is to have no offspring." Hsien Fêng and Tzü An had no children; there was no son to observe the Ancestor Ceremonies when the emperor should "ascend on high, dragon-borne". Three years after Orchid entered the Forbidden City, it was announced that she had a son.

This splendid news was received with great rejoicing all over China. At last there was an Heir Apparent. Orchid was promoted to the rank of Imperial Concubine and, as the mother of the emperor's only son, became almost as important as the childless Tzü An.

The event was celebrated with a public holiday. Officials who had been banished for their misdeeds were granted permission to return home, their honours restored. Prison gates were thrown open and all convicts released. For three days no beasts were killed for meat, all caged birds were released, and even fish, kept alive in water awaiting the market, were thrown back into the rivers and lakes from which they came. Flags and streamers flew from every important building and the clear night sky over Peking was lit by gorgeous fireworks, which burst in the sky in the semblance of orchids.

Some years afterwards it was whispered that Orchid never had

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a child at all; that she had procured a baby boy from a poor woman, and that the eunuch Li had murdered the mother lest the secret should become known. There are reasons for thinking this ugly rumour true, but no one will ever know for certain.

During the next few years, Li made himself especially useful to the young mother of the Heir Apparent. Through him she learned what was discussed at the emperor's daily audience with his ministers, what Tzü An said and did, and, even, what news there was of the foreign "barbarians".

She remembered that, as a child of seven, she had heard of a war between China and England, which the "barbarians" won. Now another war broke out with the same aggressive foreigners and the French. The fighting was not severe, but when Peking became threatened, Hsien Fêng agreed to terms. Then some foreigners, carrying what to them was a flag of truce, were killed by Chinese soldiers, and hostilities re-opened.

All at once the Forbidden City, which had been the safest place on earth for the Sons of Heaven, was imperilled. It seemed that nowhere was immune from the up-to-date guns of the "barbarians". The emperor decided to run away.

When the young Imperial Concubine heard of this decision she begged the emperor to stay. The Dragon Throne must never be left vacant, she said. With more courage than sense, she told the good-for-nothing Hsien Fêng that when the "barbarian" soldiers found themselves face to face with the Emperor of China, they would be stricken with awe and would be thankful to creep away unscathed!

Her advice was disregarded and the emperor announced that he and his whole court were leaving Peking for Jehol, "on an autumn tour of inspection".

The routine of the court was so upset by this precipitate flight that during the three days' journey, and for some time afterwards, there was the greatest confusion. Orchid, now twenty-five years old, remained calm and made good use of the confusion to improve her position. She wrote some of the edicts issued by the distracted emperor, and although these showed complete ignorance of the military situation, and no understanding of the strength of European arms, they were not wholly devoid of ideas and, at least, defied the enemy in bold words. When news came

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that the English and French had destroyed the beautiful Summer Palace as a reprisal, the indignation of the Imperial Concubine was shared by Chinese and Manchus alike.

After peace was restored the court did not hurry back to Peking. The emperor had "lost face" over his failure to stand up to the "barbarians" and, moreover, during the whole ten years of his reign a serious rebellion had been ravaging south and central China. The emperor's dissolute ways had undermined his health and it was thought, generally, that he would not live much longer.

Orchid, as the emperor's favourite and mother of the Heir Apparent, exercised considerable power in state affairs, but she realised that when Hsien Fêng died, and her baby son became emperor, the real power for some years to come would pass to a Regent. Her eunuch spies told her that a certain minister, the Grand Secretary, Su Shun, was plotting to get himself and his friends appointed regents. Orchid was not the young woman to watch power slip out of her hands. Since she came to court she had spent much time reading Chinese history and knew how to support any action by quoting precedent. She knew also the laws and rules of the Manchu clans.

No one could expect her to have any affection for her wretched husband and, having made her plans carefully, she chose her own time to put them into effect by murdering Hsien Fêng. Her eunuch Li gave the ailing emperor poison and at the same time stole the great jade seal, used on all important documents.

When the poison had done its work, Su Shun and his friends claimed the regency, but their authority lacked the official seal. They issued several decrees in the name of the infant emperor, who was at once enthroned as T'ung Chih. One of these decrees conferred the rank of Dowager Empress on both Tzü An and on the Imperial Concubine. Orchid, it appeared, was to be known henceforth as Tzü Hsi, which means "motherly and auspicious". If the self-appointed regents thought this honorific title would satisfy the ambitious young woman they were soon disillusioned.

It has been said, with good reason, that in China the dead are considered before the living. The political situation was critical, but all agreed the first thing to be done was to attend to the funeral of the late emperor. Is there not a proverb, *The most important thing in life is to be well buried*? Custom demanded that the

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royal corpse be taken to the capital accompanied by all important ministers, including the Grand Secretary; and that the funeral procession be met on arrival in Peking by the two Dowager Empresses and the child emperor.

One hundred and twenty men were to carry the enormous coffin through the hilly pathways to the capital and the journey could not be completed in less than ten days. Meanwhile the Dowager Empresses and their party had to hurry ahead to complete the funeral arrangements.

Su Shun was troubled because he feared that Tzü Hsi would use her influence in Peking to stir up opposition to his regency before he could get there; and this was, indeed, what the far-seeing Orchid intended. Had Su Shun known that the missing jade seal was in her baggage, he would have been still more worried. Su Shun and his friends took counsel together, and decided to have both Tzü An and Tzü Hsi assassinated at a place half-way on their route to the capital.

There can be no doubt their plot would have succeeded had it not been discovered by the guardsman Jung Lu, who had loved Orchid before she became a concubine. He took a band of picked soldiers and galloped after the Dowager Empresses, reaching them just in time to prevent the double assassination.

Before the slow funeral procession had reached Peking, Tzü Hsi was complete master of the situation. She ordered her guards, now under the command of Jung Lu, to arrest the Grand Secretary, who was still on his way, and his accomplices, who had just arrived in Peking. She boldly accused them of treason. She produced a document, bearing the official seal, appointing herself and Tzü An as joint regents during the minority of the boy emperor. Then came an edict which declared "our sincere reluctance in assuming the direction of affairs must be manifest to all". A second edict referred to the "unspeakable wickedness" of Su Shun, saying, "our hair stands on end with horror at such abominable treason". He was executed in public and his friends were given the length of silk to commit suicide. The property of the unfortunate minister, worth several millions of pounds sterling, was confiscated. It provided a solid foundation for the private fortune which Tzü Hsi began to amass and which she used adroitly to consolidate her power.

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After this *coup d'état*, the boy emperor sat on the Dragon Throne at official audiences like a ventriloquist's dummy, while Tzü Hsi, hidden behind a curtain, put the right words into the child's mouth. She was careful to screen her ambition in other ways too; pretending always to consult Tzü An, a foolish woman who was incapable of ruling anyone.

The training of princes has been always a difficult matter. They cannot be treated as normal boys and so may turn into queer characters, or even monstrosities. The peculiar life of the Forbidden City made things worse, and the little emperor T'ung Chih never had a chance. Overpowered by his domineering "mother", over-indulged by the foolish Tzü An, spoilt by the ladies of the court and taught bad habits by the eunuchs, he grew up to be a wild and irresponsible youth. When he was of age he was married, and the period of regency soon came to an end.

Tzü Hsi was now thirty-seven years old, and though she was obliged to hand over her power to the young emperor she continued to keep a very close watch on public affairs. Nothing escaped the eunuch Li, and all that he saw or heard was reported to his mistress. Naturally the emperor and his young empress did not wish to refer everything to the former regent, and their independence offended Tzü Hsi. After so many years of government she had no intention of allowing an unruly son and a mere daughter-in-law to settle matters as they pleased. Besides, filial duty demanded their obedience.

Within a few years this struggle for power led to a crisis. The emperor contracted smallpox, which at once posed the question, "what if he dies?" T'ung Chih had no son and there were several possible candidates for the throne. While Tzü Hsi was considering this delicate matter she learned that the empress was going to have a baby. This was not at all what the Dowager wanted. If the child was a boy he would be heir to the throne, and his young mother would become as important as she herself had been, when the fireworks over Peking proclaimed that the concubine Orchid had borne a son to Hsien Fêng.

While the emperor was convalescent he had a mysterious relapse. Within a few hours he was dead. This sudden tragedy found Tzü Hsi as resourceful as ever. She called an emergency council of ministers and proposed her own sister's baby son as



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emperor, with herself and Tzū An once more joint regents. She had ready, at the tip of her tongue, instances from Chinese history to excuse such a questionable choice. Indeed, Tzū Hsi met this dynastic crisis so promptly and so completely that it is impossible to ignore the rumour that she deliberately murdered the emperor T'ung Chih, her supposed son. A word from her to the eunuch Li would ensure, at any time, the prompt and efficient murder of anyone.

What is certain is that Tzū Hsi caused the death of the empress before her child was born. Thus, within a short time of the emperor's death, the empress and a possible "pretender" were out of the way; Tzū Hsi's baby nephew was on the Dragon Throne; and she was again securely in power for a number of years. A proverb says, *Heaven sees; earth sees; the gods see; the devils see; do not say 'nobody sees'*. There were upright officials who saw and protested against these events, but the cool daring and prompt actions of Tzū Hsi made all such protests unavailing.

She was not likely to be deterred by the teaching of *The Book of Songs*:

*In your secret chamber even you are judged;  
See you do nothing to blush for,  
Though but the ceiling looks down upon you.*

The new boy emperor, Kuang Hsü, never liked Tzū Hsi but showed a marked preference for the foolish Tzū An. As he grew up, other differences arose between the two regents. People of little character, who find themselves in authority, act sometimes with erratic boldness, and one day Tzū An ordered the execution of the Head Eunuch, whom she knew to be one of Tzū Hsi's favourites. The enraged Tzū Hsi could not bring this fellow back to life, but she appointed in his place the infamous Li Lien-ying.

Tzū Hsi allowed Li great liberties and consulted him in many affairs of state. She delighted in theatrical performances and often wrote plays for the eunuchs to act. It was common gossip in the tea houses of Peking that Tzū Hsi and Li, dressed in fancy costumes, had picnics together on the palace lakes, and, even, that she allowed him to dress in robes of the Imperial yellow, sacred to majesty.

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A common title for the emperor was, "Lord of Ten Thousand Years" and Li became so powerful in the Forbidden City that he was openly called, "Lord of Nine Thousand Years", suggesting that he was but one degree below the Son of Heaven.

Tzü An protested at the arrogant behaviour of this favourite and the two regents quarrelled over the matter. Not long afterwards Tzü An died. It was said she died of anger, an unusual cause of death in a healthy middle-aged woman. There were whispers of foul play, because just before the regent's sudden death she ate some cakes sent her by Tzü Hsi; and Tzü Hsi, with unexpected consideration, had given an order that the dead body should not be seen by relatives or friends—for fear of contagion!

For the next seven years Tzü Hsi was sole regent of China. It was during this period that she became known as "Old Buddha", a nickname that is misleading, for she did not live to be really old.

When she was fifty-three she had to retire for the second time, Kuang Hsü being then of age.

The young emperor was feeble in health and character. He feared the formidable aunt who had placed him on the throne, but he obeyed her, partly from filial duty—the all-pervading loyalty of China—and partly because his palace training under her dominant direction left him with no will of his own. Tzü Hsi wanted him to marry her niece. Kuang Hsü did not like the girl, but, at the age of nineteen, obediently married her.

Before this unhappy marriage, while Tzü Hsi was still regent, there had been more trouble with the foreign "barbarians". The French seized Annam and the English occupied Burma, both tributary states of China. Missionaries and traders came to China in increasing numbers, demanding rights of protection and privileges which differed from local custom. After the regency ended, Tzü Hsi insisted on being told all that went on; and the frequent "incidents" with foreigners angered her.

In 1894 war broke out with Japan. This was especially irritating to Tzü Hsi because it interfered with the celebration of her sixtieth birthday. Five miles of triumphal arches had been erected between the Forbidden City and the new Summer Palace; there were to be firework displays of unimaginable beauty; and the whole show was calculated to increase her prestige with the nation. What was more important, it was

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calculated, in exact figures, to increase the fortune she had been amassing ever since that first windfall confiscated from the "traitor" Su Shun. Every important official throughout China was "invited" to contribute a birthday present of twenty-five per cent of his salary!

Tzü Hsi was clever in managing her own finances and considered such "presents" very appropriate. Indeed, she had long experience in these matters from working with the eunuch Li. When an official desired an audience with her, it had to be arranged by Li, at a price which might be as much as one hundred thousand *taels* (about ten thousand pounds sterling) for a period of five minutes; which bribe was shared between Li and his royal mistress. When tribute money arrived from the various provinces, Tzü Hsi took fifty per cent, the eunuchs were allowed twenty per cent and the balance was handed to Jung Lu, who was now Grand Secretary, for the upkeep of the army—after he had taken from it his own salary.

With such methods of finance and with the Manchus unwilling to learn anything of European ways, it was no wonder the western-trained Japanese defeated China. Tzü Hsi, very unjustly, blamed the young emperor. She was not sufficiently intelligent to understand the causes of China's weakness, nor to see the remedy. All she did was to rage against foreigners and find a scapegoat in the unfortunate Kuang Hsi.

Although the emperor was insipid, his Chinese tutor inspired him with the desire to serve his country, and his favourite concubine, named Pearl, encouraged him to assert his authority. Many Chinese, at this time, saw that China must adopt drastic reforms if she was to survive in a world of nations intent on overseas expansion. The reformers actually persuaded the emperor to sign many edicts—to invite foreign technicians to China, to modernise education, to initiate a system of parliamentary rule, to build railways and roads, to turn old temples into schools, to abolish corrupt practices in the Civil Service, and to accomplish other reforms of a like nature.

Kuang Hsi knew that any one of these proposals would be opposed vehemently by his aunt, so he detailed a general, named Yüan Shih-kai, to throw a cordon of troops round the Summer Palace, where she dwelt, in order that her eunuch spies would be

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unable to report to her what he was doing. It was certainly unwise to propose so many drastic reforms all at once, and the intended action to forestall interference from Tzu Hsi was too half-hearted. Yüan Shih-kai, instead of obeying his emperor, at once told Jung Lu and together they betrayed the plan to Tzu Hsi.

The Dowager Empress was furious. With her usual presence of mind and boldness of action, she hurried to the Forbidden City, burst in upon the well-meaning but feeble Kuang Hsu, cowed him with a tirade and ordered the eunuch Li to confine him on an island in one of the lakes. The Pearl concubine was arrested also, and, because she had encouraged the emperor in his laudable reforms, she was imprisoned in solitary confinement under cruel conditions. Six reform leaders were executed and others banished.

This action of Tzu Hsi was quite unconstitutional. She seized power for herself; and, at the age of sixty-three, became, once again, absolute ruler of China by virtue of her dynamic personality. As a philosopher of the fourth century B.C. said:

*He who steals a coin is hanged,  
He who steals a state is crowned.*

A popular entertainment in Chinese cities, rather like the travelling circus of the West, was provided by troupes of jugglers and acrobats, known as *Mai yi te*, which means literally "sellers of art", but has been translated freely as "doers of stunts". These men were clever at mock fights in which they wielded swords, spears and daggers with the utmost fury and apparently with serious intent; but always without anyone being injured. Their guild, or trade union, was known to Europeans as the Righteous Harmonious Fists or, more simply, Boxers.

A certain Manchu prince, who shared Tzu Hsi's hatred of foreigners, suggested to her that he should organise the Boxers as the spearhead for an attack on the "barbarians". The *Mai yi te* were scattered all over China and it was easy to stir such ignorant men to a fanatical hate. On an agreed date they could attack the foreigners without warning, slaying men, women and children. In this simple way, he argued, China would

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be cleared of missionaries, traders and diplomats at one fell swoop.

China had very good reasons for disliking the Western nations. A high-minded Chinese official expressed the matter thus:

Foreigners have made some score of treaties with China, containing at least ten thousand characters. Is there a word in any of them concerning reverence for parents, or the cultivation of virtue and respect for the nine canons of rightful conduct? No! Is there a word in any of them as to the observance of ceremony, as to duty, integrity, and a proper sense of shame, the four cardinal principles of our nation? Again, no! All that they speak of is material profit! Such and such a clause implies benefits or profits for China! They think only of profit and with the meretricious hope of profit they beguile the Chinese people. These men know not even the meaning of duty and ceremony, wisdom and good faith, yet we profess, forsooth, to expect them to act as if they were endowed with the five cardinal virtues.

There was nothing high-minded about Tzū Hsi's hate, which was due rather to ignorance and fear. She actually believed that medical missionaries "take the eyes of our little children from which to make medicine". She listened to this Manchu prince, and gave the order which unleashed the hordes of crazy Boxers on the unsuspecting missionaries in the interior, on their Chinese converts, and on the Legation officials and traders in Peking.

Many Chinese were as horrified by this foul deed as were the peoples of the world outside China. After thousands of harmless folk had been slain, a relief force of foreign soldiers fought their way to Peking. Once again an "autumn tour of inspection" was announced, as had been done forty years earlier, when the Emperor Hsien Fêng fled before punitive foreign troops under similar circumstances.

Before leaving Peking, Tzū Hsi hid her treasure and then sent for her royal prisoners, the emperor and his beloved Pearl concubine. After two years in solitary confinement, Pearl was in a pitiable condition, but Tzū Hsi knew no mercy. She ordered her eunuchs to throw the living girl down a deep well; even before

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the eyes of the emperor who loved her. As for the emperor, she handed him over to guards to make sure he did not escape during the long journey into the interior.

For nearly two years the court of the Dowager Empress remained in exile, while Manchu officials negotiated a settlement with the irate Western Powers. When, at last, Tzu Hsi returned to the capital she was overjoyed to find her treasure undisturbed, though there had been some shameful looting by foreign soldiers and much wanton destruction.

As a result of the Boxer troubles the Powers now had soldiers garrisoned on the railway near Peking and their own guards at the Legations. Foreigners moved about the country with the assurance of conquerors. Journalists wrote of the coming "break-up" of China, and politicians argued about "spheres of influence".

Tzu Hsi hated all foreigners to the end of her days but she saw she must placate them. She invited European and American women to her parties. She talked of reforms, and even issued reform edicts that deceived some Westerners into thinking she had changed her ways. One of these "reforms" abolished corporal punishment but, only a few weeks later, Tzu Hsi had one of the reform party flogged to death.

Very soon the Manchu court was back to something like its former corruption. Jung Lu was the political power behind the throne, till his death in 1903, and the eunuch Li was the power within the Forbidden City.

The captive emperor performed state rituals, for he was still, in name, the Son of Heaven. When such work was done he amused himself with his gaolers, wrote a diary and devoted much time to sketching demons and spirits. Often he drew a large tortoise, labelled it Yuan Shih-kai and shot at it with a toy bamboo bow. In this imbecile way he took revenge on the general who had betrayed him. Kuang Hsu was so foolish as to let it be known that if he outlived the Dowager Empress—and he was thirty-six years her junior—he would, at once, order the execution of Yuan Shih-kai and also of the eunuch Li Lien-ying.

On her seventy-third birthday Tzu Hsi held a masquerade, at which she appeared, very inappropriately, in the role of the Goddess of Mercy. Attended by princesses, concubines and eunuchs, all in fancy dress, she had a picnic on the palace lake,

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and ate too much from a dish of clotted cream and crab-apples. Next day she was very ill. A few days later she seemed to have recovered completely, but the health of the emperor was reported to be unsatisfactory. There is no doubt he was being poisoned.

Whether Li wanted him out of the way in case the Dowager Empress died, or whether she conspired with him in the murder, from a mixture of motives, is not clear. Certainly she knew.

While the emperor was dying, Tzu Hsi appointed as his successor the infant grandson of her sister, who had married her own first love, Jung Lu. She meant to continue her rule as regent, with yet a third baby emperor. But it was not to be. A few hours after poison ended the miserable life of Kuang Hsu, Tzu Hsi fainted as she was eating her midday meal.

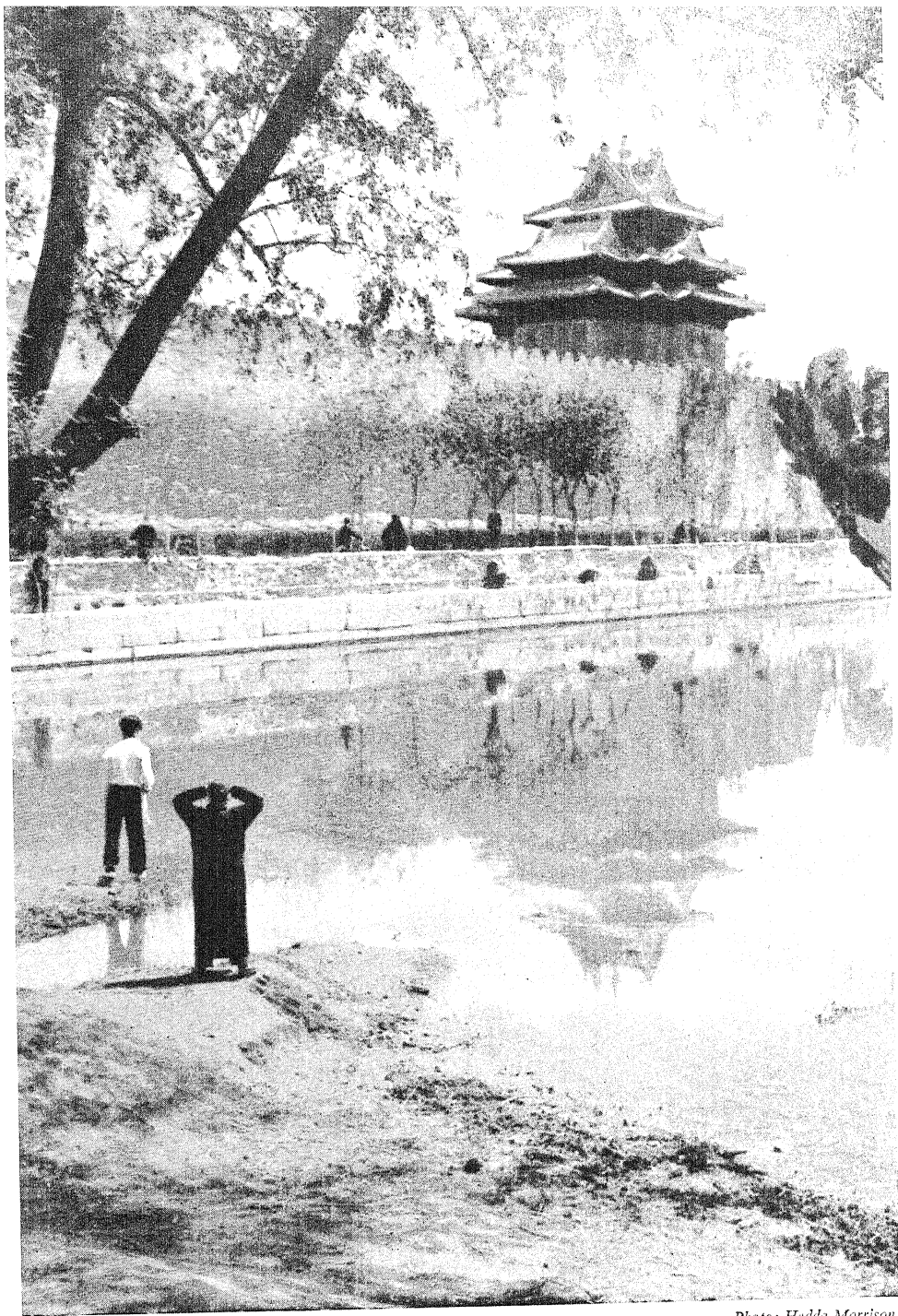
When a Chinese ruler was known to be dying it was customary to issue a Valedictory Decree. Tzu Hsi recovered consciousness, ordered her last decree to be prepared and, when it was ready, made some alterations in the draft.

It is reported that as she lay dying she was asked, in accordance with another Chinese custom, to utter her last words. She said, "Never again allow any woman to hold the supreme power in the state—do not allow eunuchs to meddle in government matters."

Whether these last words were hers or another's, they are remarkably applicable. She governed China for more than fifty years, during one of the most difficult periods in the history of the empire. Her vivid personality threw a certain glamour over court life, but the government was undermined by the eunuchs she encouraged and her misrule was very nearly fatal to China.

Tzu Hsi had been described as a "grand adventuress". From childhood she wanted to make a mark in the world and when, as the concubine of Hsien Feng, she tasted power, she liked the flavour and, thereafter, was prepared to do anything to obtain it. She was astute, but sometimes her clever brain was dimmed by the crudest superstitions. She believed in astrologers, as, indeed, did most Chinese of that time; she listened to fortune-tellers and she sought omens. Her personality and good looks brought her much admiration and, if she was feared by many of her servants, she was loved by some. She herself feared no man.

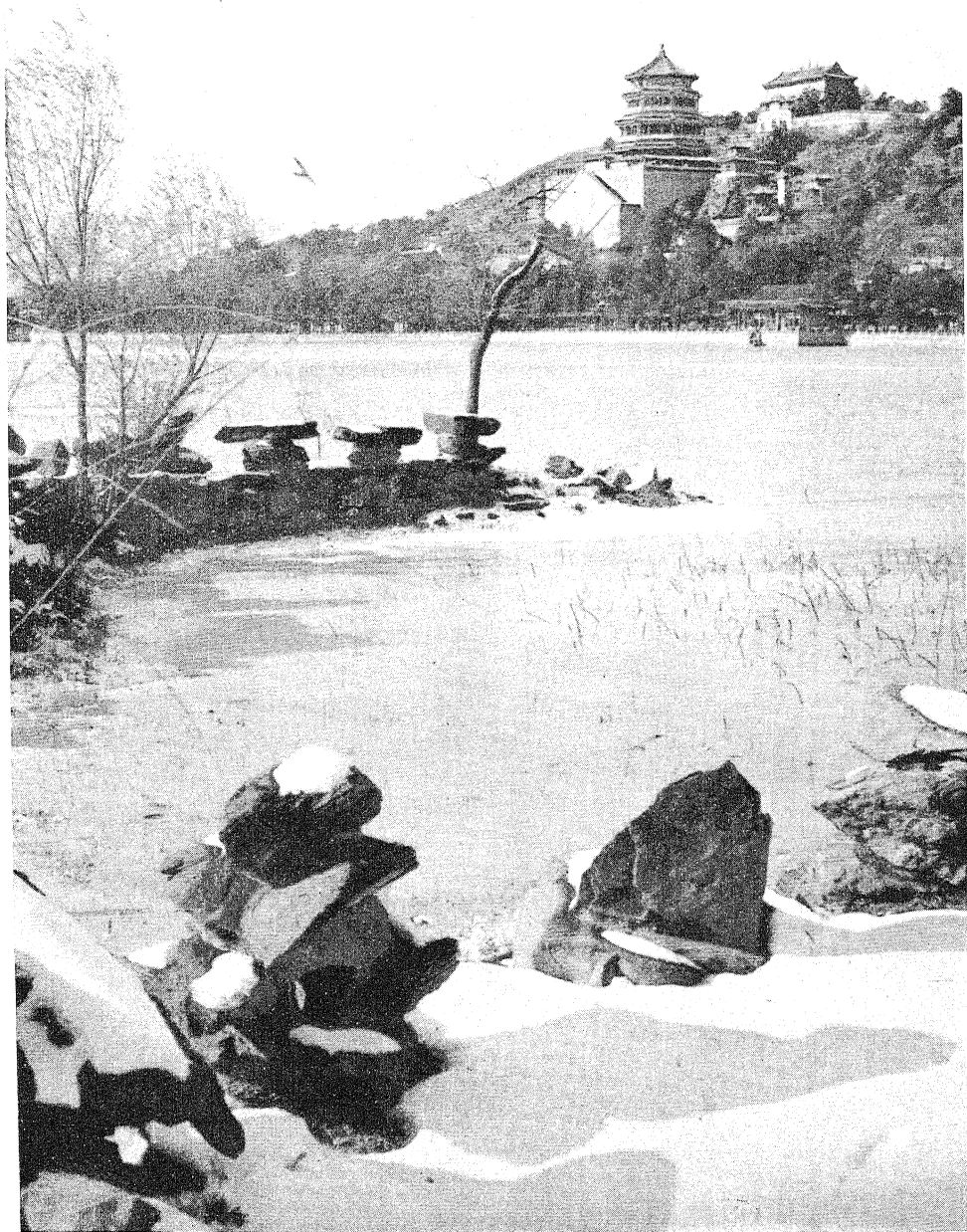
Mencius said, "The nobler type of man has three sources of joy,



*Photo: Hedda Morrison*

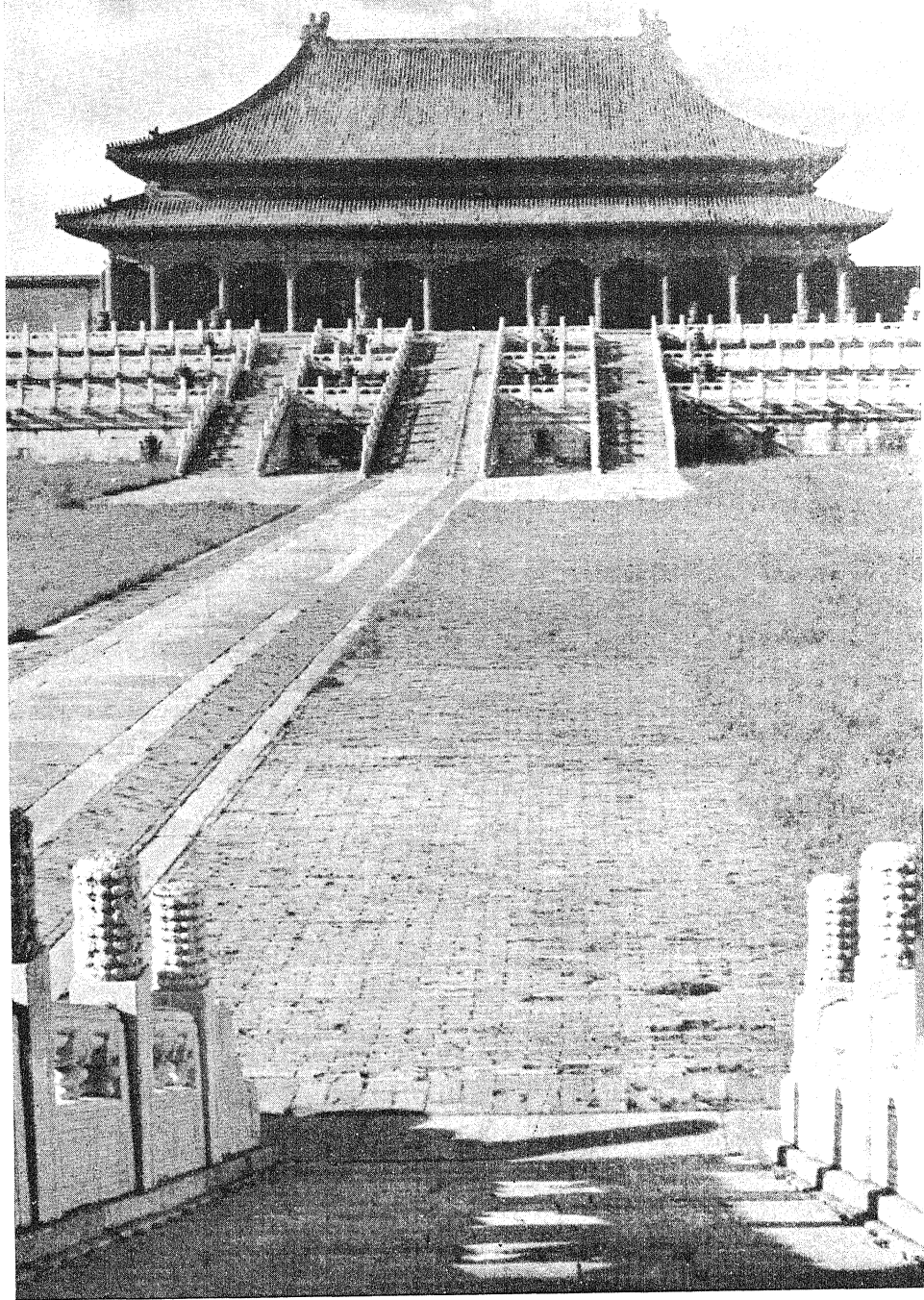
SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY, WITH THE  
MOAT IN THE FOREGROUND





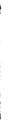
*Photo: Hedda Morrison*

SUMMER PALACE, PEKING, IN WINTER



*Photo: Hedda Morrison*

THE T'AI HO T'EN, MAIN RECEPTION HALL IN THE FORBIDDEN  
CITY, PEKING



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and to rule the empire is not one of them." Tzu Hsi found intense joy in ruling, and she was not noble.

When all is said in her favour it cannot be forgotten that this woman committed many serious crimes: murders of important persons, including her own relatives, who stood in her way; murders of menials who, in some trivial matter, failed to please her; murders of reformers and revolutionaries who fell into her bloody hands; and, above all, the terrible crime of inciting the Boxers to wholesale massacre.

It is usual for Chinese to be given honorific names in celebration of such events as a sixtieth birthday, or for outstanding service to their country. Tzu Hsi chose to be honoured in this way many times, so that when she died her full official name was, Tzu Hsi, Tuan-yu, K'ang-yi, Chao-yü, Chuang-ch'eng, Shou-kung, Ch'in-hsien, Ch'ung-hsi, Juang Tai-hou. This has been translated, "The Empress Dowager, motherly, auspicious, orthodox, heaven-blessed, prosperous, all-nourishing, brightly manifest, calm, sedate, perfect, long-lived, respectful, reverend, worshipful, illustrious and exalted". There are historical implications in some of these titles, but, if they are ignored, perhaps only "prosperous" is really applicable.

Tzu Hsi is best known as "Old Buddha". This nickname was given her during a period of drought, when she and her court prayed to Buddha for rain, as four thousand years earlier the sage emperor Yao prayed to Heaven because the crops of his people were endangered.

Tzu Hsi offered prayer on three consecutive days, and rain came. The eunuch Li, ever ready to flatter his mistress, said, "Your Majesty is great. See how Buddha answers your prayers. It is almost as though you were Buddha yourself!" This fulsome compliment so pleased Tzu Hsi that she allowed Li to address her as "Old Buddha" and the name became general. It spread from the court-yards and lakes of the Forbidden City, through the Eastern and Western Gates of Glory, to the market places of Peking and, thence, to all China. Foreigners picked up the name; and it is not unfitting that Tzu Hsi should be known in history by the nickname bestowed on her, in arch flattery, by one of the most cruel scoundrels who ever served as eunuch in a despot's court.

# SUN YAT-SEN

## THE NATIONAL HERO OF MODERN CHINA

(A.D. 1866-1925)

THERE was a regular hubbub in the village schoolroom at Choy-hung—regular because it went on every day and all day. The pupils were memorising one part or another of *The Three Character Classic*. Each boy repeated aloud his particular task, for this method of memorising had been used successfully in Chinese schools for hundreds of years. Moreover, he spoke loudly because it was thought that the louder one read the more certainly the words would be remembered.

When a boy knew his task he did what is called *be shu*. (*Be* means "recite" and *shu* means "books".) He went to the master, bowed respectfully, placed his open book on the desk, and then, turning his back, repeated the lesson. Custom decreed that a teacher should seldom praise a pupil. When the lesson was repeated perfectly, another passage was set and the boy went back to his place, and again joined in the orderly uproar.

Classical Chinese was different from the everyday spoken language of the people, so that the pupils did not understand what they memorised.

One day, about the year 1876, a boy of the Sun family caused a sensation. Instead of performing the *be shu*, he said to the master, "I do not understand anything of *The Three Character Classic*. What is the use of learning by heart what I do not understand?" The master was horrified that a pupil should dare to speak thus. Did not the proverb say, *A child should have ears but not a mouth*? One by one the other children stopped shouting, awed into silence by this unprecedented event; for, although Sun did not realise it, he was questioning the system on which Chinese education had been based for centuries. He was caned for impertinence, but his young mind was not convinced. Again he asked, "Why should I from morning till night shriek at the top of my voice things which I do not understand? Why not, at least, explain these things to me?"

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Chinese schools at that time had no blackboards, wall maps, or diagrams, for the children learned no mathematics, science, foreign languages or geography; and even the history was little more than ancient stories of perfect children whose good behaviour must be copied.

At home, Sun learned from his parents the precepts of Confucius, and, especially, all that was meant by filial piety. His father was a farmer who worked a small plot of land, paying the landlord half the crops as rent. Young Sun, like other boys in the village, knew what it meant to be short of food. His cotton robe was clean but threadbare, and at night he slept on a wooden plank bed with a bag of beans for pillow. "It was not as uncomfortable as a brick covered with cloth," he said, "nor as soft as a pillow of tea leaves."

Choyhung was near the port of Canton, and sometimes, at the village tea house, travellers told incredible tales of ships that went for many days across the sea, to lands where the people had plenty of food, and where a coolie might earn in one moon as much as in a whole year in China. No one quite believed these yarns, but other news, heard at the tea house, was all too often correct—stories of honest farmers arrested by the local *mandarin* to make them pay more tax than was properly due; reports of villages looted by bandits; and of pirates who threatened to attack Choyhung unless the village elders paid a large sum of money by a given date.

Sun ventured to ask an elder how such disorders arose, since he had been taught, from *The Book of Filial Duty*, that "the good emperors of old behaved themselves respectfully and humbly so that the people might not quarrel with one another". Alas! the emperor in 1876 was a baby, and Old Buddha, who ruled, did not behave "respectfully and humbly", but thought only of keeping the Manchus on the Dragon Throne and of making a fortune out of "the stupid people", as she called the common folk of China.

There was such poverty in South China that many young men emigrated—to Malaya, to the Philippines, to Hawaii, and even to America. Sun's brother Ah Mi, fifteen years his senior, went to Hawaii and soon established himself as a farmer on his own land, in the vicinity of Pearl Harbour.

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When Sun was eleven, Ah Mi visited Choyhung and offered to take his brother abroad. But a proverb says, *If you do your duty to your parents at home, there is no need to burn incense abroad*, and Confucius said, "While the father and mother are alive, a good son does not wander far afield." Ah Mi returned alone, but next year the parents gave their consent, and young Sun went aboard an English ship for the three weeks' voyage to Hawaii. He scarcely noticed the vanishing coast of China, for his eager eyes were on the throbbing machinery and "the wonder of the flaming boilers".

Sun left behind a village life that had changed little in centuries; he went into a world that was experiencing, almost daily, new engineering marvels and scientific discoveries.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Hawaii was inhabited by cannibals, but American missionaries had brought them civilisation, and when Sun arrived, in 1879, a native king ruled an enlightened community, under laws administered on English lines.

Ah Mi planned a fine career for his young brother. He sent him to a boarding school run by the English Bishop of Honolulu, for there he might learn good English and thus qualify for a post in an American bank or business.

The new boy from Choyhung saw, for the first time, Western-style public buildings; and the school regulation that every boarder must bring "two pairs of sheets" is a hint of the drastic surprises he experienced.

Sun was impressed strongly by the orderliness of English school life and by the fairness of the teachers. He learned English so thoroughly that he won the second prize in English grammar. He was taught mathematics, and geography, and was particularly interested in English history. The story of Magna Charta and of Cromwell's struggle against Charles the First awakened his mind to the possibility of a determined people curbing the powers of their rulers. He contrasted the liberty enjoyed by the English people with the fatalist outlook of the Chinese towards the injustices they endured under Manchu rule.

When he visited Ah Mi for the holidays, he realised that his brother worked no harder than did his father in Choyhung, but that Ah Mi prospered because there were no pirates, or

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bandits, or unjust officials. Evidently good government was something to fight for and maintain.

Every morning and evening at school, Sun attended prayers conducted by the bishop, and every Sunday he went to the English cathedral. He learned to sing Christian hymns to Western melodies. When he was sixteen, he told Ah Mi he wanted to be baptised. The elder brother was furious. Ah Mi had never imagined his own father's son would be so lacking in filial piety as to abandon the religion of his ancestors. It was not for this he had paid school fees!

Ah Mi wrote at once to Choyhung, and his father replied ordering the boy's immediate return to China. "I will take this Jesus nonsense out of him when he gets home," he said. "I will see whether he will abandon the religion and customs of his ancestors and take up with the superstitions of the foreign devils."

Back in Choyhung, Sun worked for a year in his father's small fields—breaking sunbaked earth with a hoe; stooping hour after hour, in a flooded field, planting rice; reaping with a curved knife; thrashing paddy, by banging it against the inside rim of a barrel; or marking-time all day on the tread of a water-wheel. But all the while dreaming of the brave new world he had seen through the books of an English school in Hawaii.

After the clean white sheets of the boarding school and the orderly meals with the bishop and his wife, Choyhung seemed dirty and intolerable. After the faith, hope and charity of Christian teaching, the manifold fears which brought his neighbours to the feet of plaster gods in the village temple seemed stupid.

One day, Sun took some other young men to the temple. He made a speech denouncing idolatry, and then struck the gods. Twisting off the finger of one idol, he cried, "Behold, what kind of a god protects your village!"

Choyhung was aghast. The gods would certainly withdraw their protection. Disaster might overtake the village at any moment. Men cursed the Sun family, and women awaited in fear the blow that would surely follow such sacrilege. The village elders met in council. Confucius said, "Is not he who neglects to teach his son his duties equally guilty with the son who fails in them?" The elders ordered the father to pay the



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cost of immediate repairs to the damaged god; and they banished the young man from the village.

Sun's action required great courage. It not only flouted the beliefs of all those about him; it was an offence against filial piety. His banishment was serious, for in China so many activities are hinged, as it were, to the family system.

What happened during the next few months is uncertain; but early in the year 1884, Sun was enrolled at Queen's College, Hong Kong. Within a few months he formally accepted Christianity, being baptised by an American missionary. He was eager to convert his friends and, a year after his attack on the gods of Choyhung, took this missionary to visit the village.

Sun's family had made plans for his marriage and, at the age of eighteen, he married the girl chosen for him. After the ceremony she remained with her mother-in-law in Choyhung, while Sun returned to his college. The marriage name he chose for himself was taken from *The Book of Rites*, and had a spiritual significance. Very likely he had in mind the words:

The men of old, in their desire to manifest great virtue throughout the empire, began with good government in the various states. To achieve this, it was necessary first to order aright their own families, which in turn was preceded by cultivation of their own selves.

One of China's greatest needs, at this time, was for Western-trained doctors of medicine. Sun left Queen's College after two and a half years, and worked as an assistant in a missionary hospital in Canton. Then, in 1887, Dr. (afterwards Sir) James Cantlie opened the first medical college in China, at Hong Kong, and Sun became its first student. For five years he studied under Cantlie, who was impressed by the young man's "gentleness of character and earnestness in study". It was the beginning of a life-long friendship.

In the English colony there was complete freedom of speech, and Sun often discussed politics with his fellow students. "When we did not talk of revolution," he said, "we did not feel happy."

At the age of twenty-six, Sun was a fully qualified doctor. He marked the occasion by taking the name by which he is known

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generally in Western countries, Sun Yat-sen. It has poetical and spiritual meaning, implying that his spirit had been refined by long studies and that he was released from conventional Chinese ideas of medicine.

Dr. Sun began to practise at a hospital in the little Portuguese colony of Macao. His teacher, Dr. Cantlie, came over by boat from Hong Kong every Sunday to help in difficult operations; because, as he said, he "loved and respected" his former pupil. But the Portuguese doctors were jealous and forced Sun to leave the colony.

Mencius said, "When Heaven intends to call a man to a great mission . . . he is frustrated in what he sets out to do, so that his ambition may be kindled and his character strengthened . . ." Sun, frustrated in his medical practice, went with a friend to one of the northern provinces, where an enlightened viceroy was about to open a Western-style hospital. The two young men walked right through China, from south to north. On the way, they drew up a programme of moderate political reforms, which Sun signed with his *ming* (or personal) name, Sun Wên, by which he is known generally in China. The programme was ignored by the viceroy, and the two friends after visiting Peking returned to South China.

On the long journey, Sun saw the miserable poverty of the masses of his countrymen, and became convinced that as long as the Manchus governed, there was no hope of reform. The defeat of China in the war with Japan was a further blow to his national pride, but it showed the weakness of the Manchu government. Only by spreading amongst the masses a discontent with the Manchus and a desire for reforms could China be saved.

Sun turned from medicine to revolutionary propaganda. With remarkable foresight he planned to enlist the support of Chinese living abroad. They knew the benefits of good government outside China, and from their prosperity could provide funds for the revolution. He went to Hawaii, and formed his first secret society, the object being "to promote and prosper China".

Almost at once, Sun received a message from a man in Shanghai, named Charles Soong, who had been educated in America, urging him to return to China, as the spread of discontent over the Japanese war seemed to favour a revolutionary rising.

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That a few young men should start a revolt in a vast country like China, to overthrow a monarchy established for thousands of years, seemed fantastic; but Sun knew that if he could seize the *jamén*, the headquarters of the provincial government, in Canton, the discontented soldiers would probably mutiny and the whole province pass into his hands. He returned to Canton and established secret headquarters in the city.

Sun arranged to bring in six hundred pistols, some rifles and dynamite. The pistols were packed in barrels labelled "cement", but, unluckily, a barrel split during unloading and the contents were revealed. The Manchu officials at once raided Sun's headquarters. He escaped, but five of his friends were caught and beheaded. Sun got away by being lowered from the city wall in a basket. A big reward was offered for his capture, but, after ten days in hiding, he reached Macao and from there crossed to Hong Kong. Dr. Cantlie helped him to get aboard a ship for Japan.

In Japan, Sun cut off his queue, grew a moustache and dressed in European clothes. The disguise was so good that he took a Japanese name, and passed himself off as a native of the country. Sun then returned to Hawaii and, after reorganising the discouraged revolutionary party, went on to America to form secret societies wherever he found Chinese residents.

So much did the Manchus fear and hate the young doctor that Old Buddha herself singled him out for special attention. The Chinese Minister in Washington was warned that Sun was "wanted" as a rebel. He was shadowed across the United States and, in the autumn of 1896, the Chinese Legation in London was informed that he had sailed from New York for Liverpool in the S.S. *Majestic*. At that time only a few Chinese visited England, and it was not difficult for agents at Liverpool to spot Sun Yat-sen.

He went straight to London, where his friends Dr. and Mrs. Cantlie made him welcome and found him lodgings in Gray's Inn Place, in a building that now bears a plaque to his memory.

On the following Sunday, Sun was to call for the Cantlies on his way to church at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. As he approached their house he was accosted by a Chinese who spoke the Canton dialect. Another Chinese came up, and Sun, suspecting nothing, walked with his countrymen to where they said they lodged, a

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building close to the present Broadcasting House. His new friends urged him to come in for a chat and, when he refused, gave him a playful shove towards the door—which opened as by magic. Next minute Sun found himself inside, with the door closed and bolted. It was the side entrance of the Chinese Legation. He was a prisoner of the Manchus.

Peking ordered that Sun was to be shipped back to China as a lunatic. Once the Manchus had him in China he could be tortured, in the hope he would betray his friends, and then executed. While a sea passage was being arranged, Sun was kept in an upstairs room. He described the first week of his imprisonment thus:

While in prison I thought I should surely meet death. . . . It is but natural for a person to beseech Heaven in time of need as it is to call one's parents when suffering from pain or trouble. In those days of suffering I only beat my heart and repented and earnestly prayed. For six or seven days I prayed incessantly day and night. The more I prayed the more earnest I was in my prayers. On the seventh day I felt suddenly comforted. I was absolutely without fear. The state of being comforted and feeling brave came to me unconsciously. This was the result of prayer.

Dr. Cantlie, who lived only a few doors from the Legation, was puzzled that Sun did not call, but he had no means of tracing his young friend. Then, late one night, a note was pushed under the doctor's front door. He read it with astonishment and dismay:

There is a friend of yours imprisoned in the Chinese Legation . . . unless something is done at once he will be taken away and no one will know. I dare not sign my name but this is the truth, so believe what I say. Whatever you do must be done at once or it will be too late.

Dr. Cantlie went to the police. They sent him to Scotland Yard, who would not believe his story and, anyway, had no authority to enter the Legation of a Foreign Power. He then saw a Judge and various officials, none of whom could help. He went to the

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Foreign Office and, at last, they agreed to investigate the matter.

The note warning Cantlie of Sun's plight had been sent by an English servant at the Legation, who now called with the news that Sun was to be put aboard a ship sailing in two days. Cantlie sent a reassuring message to the prisoner, which was smuggled into his room in a coal scuttle. As the Foreign Office was slow in acting, a private detective, ensconced in a hansom cab, was set to watch the Legation entrances. When Sun had been confined thirteen days, the Foreign Office forced the Legation to release him—"looking very thin but happy," said Mrs. Cantlie. In Peking, Old Buddha protested bitterly when she learned that the English government had rescued from her clutches "the escaped convict Sun Yat-sen".

Sun, now thirty years old, wandered about Europe studying the forms of government and conditions under which Europeans lived. He was shocked to find so much poverty, because all the white people he had seen in Hong Kong and Hawaii were prosperous. He had at first believed that all China needed was a Western form of government, but now it was evident that something more was necessary. Meanwhile, in China, the unfortunate emperor Kuang Hsü issued his reform edicts and was promptly overcome by Old Buddha. Then came the anti-foreign Boxer rising, with its disastrous consequences for China.

Sun returned to the Far East and resumed his revolutionary activities. He was so persuasive in speech that rich and poor gave generously to his party funds. He could hold an audience spell-bound for three or four hours, explaining why the Manchus must be overthrown, and painting a colourful picture of what China might become under an enlightened republican government.

He became a "mystery leader", turning up now here, now there; sometimes in disguise in China; sometimes openly in the foreign concessions of Shanghai, where his friend Soong printed his propaganda; sometimes amongst the Chinese students in Japan, and sometimes with the Chinese residents in Malaya, Hawaii or America. Many times he risked capture. Once he was saved by a friendly French official; twice he was caught but persuaded his captors to let him escape. A proverb says, *When one man disregards his life, ten thousand others are no match for him.*

In 1905 Sun came again to Europe and, speaking to Chinese

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students in Brussels, he outlined for the first time his famous *Three Principles of the People*. A few months later, in Japan, where there were now thousands of Chinese students, Sun united various reform and revolutionary societies in the League of Sworn Brothers. More than ten thousand joined the Sworn Brothers, so that when these students returned to China, revolutionary propaganda spread rapidly.

A number of attempts at active revolt failed. Once, three thousand armed revolutionists assembled in Hong Kong, where a steamer had been chartered to bring them to Canton. At the last minute the steamer was detained, and Sun, who was already in Canton, telegraphed to cancel a party of seven hundred coolies he had engaged as carriers. His message was misunderstood and the coolies arrived. When the Manchu viceroy learned there were seven hundred coolies wandering around Canton unable to explain why they had come, he grew suspicious. Sun ordered his headquarters' staff to disperse, but sixteen were caught and beheaded. Meanwhile Sun, disguised as a boatwoman, crossed the river to warn another five hundred revolutionists who had assembled in a Christian church. Then he joined a party of women in the steerage of a boat for Hong Kong and so escaped.

The last "failure" took place early in 1911. Hand grenades and pistols were smuggled into Canton, as wedding presents in a series of mock marriages. The Manchus became suspicious and posted extra guards. It would have been prudent to postpone the attempt, but one hundred *Dare-to-dies*, as the "commandos" of the Sworn Brothers were called, attacked the *yamên* and actually captured it. But the Manchus surrounded them with two thousand troops and, after five hours of desperate fighting, forty-three *Dare-to-dies* were dead and twenty-nine prisoners. The remnant fought their way out. The Manchus executed the prisoners so that, in all, seventy-two *Dare-to-dies* perished. Their sacrifice was not in vain, for the Chinese people were so inspired by their heroism that tens of thousands joined the Sworn Brothers.

A few months later, the accidental explosion of a bomb at Hankow disclosed the preparations for a new rising. On this occasion the revolutionists, fighting for their lives, were unexpectedly successful. A young student, named Chiang Kai-shek, distinguished himself by capturing Hangchow. Within a

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few weeks the revolutionists were in control of most of China. This successful rising began on the tenth day of October, 1911; and, ever since, the "Double Tenth" has been Remembrance Day for China.

Sun happened to be crossing America on the "Double Tenth". He realised the importance of gaining the support or, at least, the non-intervention of the Western Powers, especially England. So before returning to China, he went to London and was in time to stop a Bank loan to the Manchus.

On New Year's Day, 1912, Sun Yat-sen was received in Nanking with a salute of twenty-one guns, as Provisional President of the Chinese Republic.

The mystic, Lao Tzū, said, "When your work is done and fame has been achieved, then retire into the background; for this is the way of Heaven." Sun was now forty-six years old. For twenty years he had struggled with ceaseless energy and singleness of purpose against the Manchus. Now they were overthrown. He knew the problems facing the republic were enormous, and asked foreign nations "to bear in patience with us the period of trial confronting us and our reconstruction work". But it seemed his active work was done, and that he could best serve his country by advising on social, industrial, and educational developments.

Unfortunately the president chosen to succeed Sun was Yüan Shih-kai, the general who betrayed the emperor Kuang Hsü to Old Buddha. He professed enthusiasm for republicanism, but soon it became apparent that he dreamed of a new Son of Heaven on the old Dragon Throne—a Son of Heaven named Yüan Shih-kai!

The former revolutionists were obliged to oppose Yuan strongly, but the Western Powers, except America, provided him with a substantial loan of money, and gave his government "recognition". With this foreign help, Yüan made himself dictator. However, he met with so much opposition in China that he had to give up his plan of becoming an emperor.

Once again, Sun found himself in exile. With the help of his old friend Soong, and his young friend Chiang, and others, he recommenced his secret-society activities—this time against Yuan. At the age of fifty, he resumed the life of disguises, assumed names, secret journeys, passwords and constant alertness.

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The Western world was distracted by war; and, as the Powers had "recognised" Yuan, British officials in such key places as Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore now acted against Sun and his friends—"persecuting our patriots," as he complained to the Cantlies.

Yuan died in 1916, utterly discredited, with China in confusion. "War Lords" arose everywhere and rival governments operated from Peking and Canton.

For a time, Sun led the Southern government in Canton and some reforms were carried through. Then his leadership was challenged and he withdrew, sending his party the farewell message, "Preach the gospel of justice and lead the people to righteousness". He settled in Shanghai, intending to write books on political and social matters; but, from time to time, he was drawn back into practical politics.

During Sun's first long exile, he had seen little of his wife and family. After the "Double Tenth", when he returned to China, Mrs. Sun was puzzled by his clever friends, with their talk of reform, industrialisation, foreign loans and politics. She did her best, but could not altogether sympathise with ideals she did not understand. Charles Soong's second daughter, Chingling, who graduated from an American college in 1913, became Sun's secretary. She had known him when he came secretly to her father's home in Shanghai, she understood the great risks he took and ardently supported his cause. It was, therefore, not altogether surprising that Sun and his first wife agreed to separate, and that he married his devoted young secretary. Chingling, who became known to the world as Madame Sun, was a great help to her harassed husband in the last difficult years of his life.

At the end of the world war in 1918, Sun was the only statesman who foretold the coming calamity of widespread unemployment. "Millions of workers will be thrown out into the streets," he declared. As an alternative, he proposed an international effort to provide China with road-making machinery and manufactured goods. But no one in Europe or America took any notice of his proposals.

The Russian revolution, in 1917, interested China greatly, for both countries were struggling to provide education, and better living conditions, for their illiterate and poverty-stricken masses;



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but the history and culture of the two countries were quite different. Sun declared that "the communistic order, or even the Soviet system" would not be suitable for China; but he gladly made use of Russian advisers to reorganise the *Kuomintang* (or People's Party), and he sent Chiang Kai-shek to Moscow to study Red Army methods.

Sun had looked hopefully to England and America to help his cause, and he was bitterly disappointed when he found them oppose him. Since the days of Old Buddha, the Powers had collected the import taxes of China, kept what sums were due for interest on loans and indemnities, and handed back the balance to the Chinese government. A large part of these taxes were collected in Canton, and, in 1923, when the Canton government was at war with Peking, Sun asked that the Canton share of the balance should be paid to his government. Obviously it was unjust for foreign powers to collect money from the South and send it to their rivals in the North! Sun's request was ignored until he threatened to take over the Canton customs, "by force if necessary". Then the Powers made a naval demonstration against the Southern government, even "lending" a warship to the Portuguese to make the demonstration seem more international.

Such "incidents" embittered Sun, and he denounced vigorously the "imperialism" of the Powers. He had cause to do so, but at the heat of the moment he was liable to be too severe in criticism, his statements were not always accurate, and he could be rash in action. His passionate desire was that a united China might bring to an end the concessions, treaty ports, "spheres of influence", and other foreign "rights" in China; all of which had been obtained by force.

An American resident in Canton met Sun, during the year 1924, at a private party of young Chinese:

There was no smirch on his reputation. His life was an open book. These young people held him in the deepest veneration . . . he asked for three minutes of silence, for self-examination, for consideration of the doctrine of republicanism, and for self-determination. . . . At the end of it, he made the finest call to leadership of the masses that it has ever been my privilege to hear. One felt his spirit steady, true and undaunted. His eyes

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were bright, his cheeks flushed, his countenance illuminated, his body straight and vigorous. I found it impossible to believe longer the rumour that he was afflicted with a fatal organic malady.

But the rumour was true. Sun Yat-sen died of cancer on March 12th, 1925, at the age of fifty-eight. He had gone to Peking in a last attempt to unite China. The English nurse who tended him in hospital said he was "the most unselfish patient she ever nursed".

During Sun's life, large sums of money passed through his hands, given mostly by poor folk for the cause he preached. He lived always frugally, and, when he died, could say with truth, "Having devoted my life entirely to the service of the people, I have had no opportunity to build up a personal fortune." His last words were, "Peace, struggle, save China."

The "Middle Kingdom", as China used to be called, was united by a common culture. A Chinese thought of himself as belonging to a particular family and a particular village, rather than to a nation. With the impact of Western civilisation, it became important to achieve national unity; and this was the first of Sun's famous *Three Principles of the People*.

From the earliest times, the Chinese managed their local affairs through elected village elders, though in other respects submitting to the Son of Heaven and his officials. With the end of monarchy, a nation-wide system of elected representatives was needed. This was Sun's second Principle.

But he realised that even national unity and a democratic form of government would not necessarily end poverty; and his third Principle was therefore intended to cover social security.

A philosopher who died about the year 280 B.C. said, "We can point to the faggots that have been consumed, but the fire is transmitted and no one knows when it will be put out." The life of Sun Yat-sen was consumed, quite literally, in his ceaseless struggle for the common people.

Before he died, he left a short message to his countrymen, which became known as his "Will", urging them, "to raise China to a position of independence and equality among the nations", and to adopt his *Three Principles of the People*. Very

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soon this "Will" became almost a sacred document in China. It was recited regularly in schools, so that, to-day, millions of Chinese know it by heart. Large portraits of Sun appeared on public buildings, and small ones on postage stamps. The Presidents of China, on taking office, swore to "comply with the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-sen". His example of selfless devotion to the public welfare was an inspiration, and he has been acclaimed by all parties as the national hero of modern China. "The fire is transmitted and no one knows when it will be put out."

## CHIANG KAI-SHEK

(Born A.D. 1887)

RATHER more than two thousand years ago, a certain boy came home from school in light-hearted mood and, for a moment, stood watching his widowed mother at her loom. She enquired how he was getting on with his lessons. In truth he had been lazy, but he answered in a casual, off-hand manner that he was doing very well. Thereupon she took a large knife and slashed the web she was weaving. The boy, wide-eyed with astonishment and a little frightened by this dramatic deed, asked why his mother destroyed the work of weeks. Very quietly she explained that she only did what he was doing when he neglected his studies. The wise mother, by destroying the labour of her hands in a single flash, taught her son to cherish the labour of his mind, so that he became one of China's sages.

This story from the boyhood of Mencius is known to every Chinese, and has inspired millions of mothers to devise ways of influencing their sons. The mother of Mencius is the accepted pattern of perfect motherhood.

To-day, those who write the story of Chiang Kai-shek explain usually that he, like Mencius, had a perfect mother. Moreover, they wet their pen-brushes with the enduring ink of Chinese history, and begin the record at the third son of the Duke of Chou, a contemporary of Confucius; for it is the habit of Chinese biographers to rummage amongst the records of family clan books, going back a few thousand years.

It seems the Chiang family moved from one part of China to another about the time of King Alfred of England, and that in the days of William the Conqueror they produced one or two scholars of repute. Thereafter they were farmers and, occasionally, scholars; but from the time the Manchus conquered China (A.D. 1644) none of the Chiangs would enter official service. Not a very distinguished record, but, clearly, the Chiangs were exceptionally patriotic; and the family motto, *Honour your parents*

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*and elders, and work hard in the fields*, suggests disciplined life.

Chiang Kai-shek was born on the 31st of October, 1887 in the ancestral home, behind a salt shop with the signboard of Jade Serenity. Describing his childhood he said:

I was often ill and on many occasions the illness was dangerous and critical. But as soon as I was recovered I would play about as gaily as ever, hopping and skipping all day long. I was, therefore, frequently exposed to the risk of being drowned or burnt to death, or else severely cut or wounded. My poor kind mother's anxiety over me doubled that of other mothers.

When he was three, Chiang tried to swallow a chopstick—an extraordinarily difficult task. With some inches of it stuck in his throat, the child became unconscious and a doctor had to be sent for to extract the chopstick. Next morning Chiang's grandfather came to his bedside and asked, "Has my grandson become dumb?" "Grandson can talk! Not dumb at all," replied the boy with spirit.

Once, when trying to get a thin layer of ice off the top of a large jar of water, Chiang fell in head first and was nearly drowned. Twice, when bathing in Embroidery Brook, which ran before the ancestral home, he was carried away by swift currents and only rescued with difficulty.

He recalls that at the age of five he went to school, "but was much naughtier than before. My mother had to teach and persuade me to study and she had to use the birch repeatedly in order not to spoil me."

When Chiang was eight, his father "forsook us for good"—a euphemism which means that he died. Chiang remembers how his father once took him aside and explained that he had followed his forebears in refusing to serve under the Manchus, but had done his best, unofficially, to assist education in the village and district. He urged his son to work hard at school, saying, "If in future you can become useful to society you will have made up to some extent what has been my regret in life."

Chiang's mother had a struggle to make ends meet, but, like the mother of Mencius, she managed to keep her boy at school.

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When he was twelve she told him, "Since your father's death I have suffered hardships to enable you to continue your studies. I have not done so in order that you may obtain an influential post or make money, but so that you may serve your country and respect yourself."

When Chiang was not at school he helped his mother in such household tasks as lighting fires, making beds, gathering mulberry leaves for the silkworms, and gardening. From her he learnt the duties of a host, so that he could take his father's place when guests came, and she taught him various ceremonies. "Be graceful in your movements," she said, "when you pay your respects be sure there is rhythm."

A schoolmaster said of Chiang:

At play, he would regard the classroom as his stage and all his schoolmates as his toys: he could be wild and ungovernable. But when he was at his desk, reading or holding his pen trying to think, then even a hundred voices around him could not distract him from his concentration. His periods of quietude and outburst sometimes occurred within a few minutes of each other: one would think he had two different personalities. I was greatly puzzled by him.

China suffered much from nineteenth-century Western aggression, but it is an ill wind that blows away no cobwebs, and, when Chiang was a youth, freshening breezes stirred the old educational system. There was, as yet, no reform; but one of his schoolmasters talked sometimes about foreign countries. He told his pupils that the President of the United States of America was a public servant. It was difficult for Chinese boys to understand this. They expected a President to be like the Son of Heaven. But young Chiang saw clearly. "The President," he suggested, "is first of all a citizen like any other man, therefore there is little difference between them. What is there, then, to be astonished about?" The master, impressed with this observation, told the boy's mother, "Your son's nature and wisdom are above those of other children. He is sure to be a great man!"

Sport was another novelty in school life. In ancient times the Chinese played football and other outdoor games, but for some

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hundreds of years such sports had been despised. Chiang learned to run, and in one of the races at the first Inter-Schools Athletic Meeting he finished third.

But the curriculum of Chinese schools was based still on a study of the classics, and it was not until Chiang was sixteen that he began any mathematics.

Apparently one of the teachers belonged to a revolutionist secret society, for he talked to his pupils about Sun Yat-sen. He noted that whenever Sun's name was mentioned Chiang showed unusual interest. He said to Chiang, "A young man like you, who wants to achieve great things, must acquire new knowledge. The best way is to go abroad and study in foreign countries."

If Chiang had revolutionary thoughts at this time they were quickened, probably, by an injustice he suffered. A neighbour failed to pay his rice tax and vanished. The local officials ordered the rest of the village to find the tax. They arrested young Chiang and threatened him in the magistrate's court, in the hope that his mother would be frightened into paying more than her share. This kind of extortion was all too common under the Manchu government.

Shortly after Chiang's seventeenth birthday he went to another school, and we have a vivid picture of him from one of the masters:

Chiang Kai-shek was an early riser . . . it was his custom to stand erect on the veranda in front of his bedroom for half an hour. During this time his lips were compressed, his features were set in determination and he stood with his arms firmly folded. . . . At this time a certain aloofness—that has often since been mistaken for pride—manifested itself. Although he was ready to join in any game in which physical fitness was a requisite he was averse to spending his time in empty talk. Often . . . he wandered away by himself and was evidently ruminating deeply.

Newspapers were comparatively rare in country places but when they arrived from Shanghai, young Chiang read them eagerly.

Early in 1905, when Japan was fighting Russia about which of

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them should possess a piece of Chinese territory, Chiang made up his mind to study in Japan. At that time many Chinese students wanted to go to Japan, for there it was possible to get a glimpse of Western ways. What made Chiang's decision significant was that he chose to study military science. The clan book of the Chiang family makes no mention of soldiers, and, moreover, soldiers were despised throughout China. Chiang wished to prepare himself to join those who planned an armed rising against the hated Manchus. Some time later he wrote a poem with these lines:

*To bring a new dawn to our beloved celestial land is  
to fulfil my duty:  
The aim of my eastward voyage is far from seeking  
military honours.*

When Chiang Kai-shek's kinsmen and friends heard of his ambition they tried to dissuade him. Evidently they tried hard, and in China, more than in England or America, the advice of relatives and friends is to be taken very seriously. But Chiang had not spent regular hours in contemplation for nothing. He knew his own mind, and to silence the well-intentioned opposition he cut off his queue. In the year 1905 this was a risky thing to do. It was an offence against the Manchu law, and a young man without a queue was marked as having "dangerous thoughts" and, probably, dangerous revolutionary friends.

Although the kinsmen and friends disapproved, Chiang's mother, when she heard her son wanted to make the long journey to Japan, urged him to go as soon as possible and provided the passage money from her scanty resources. She wished him to have the best possible education and she trusted his judgment.

The young man reached Tokyo only to find that the Japanese would not accept him as a student, because he had not been approved by the Chinese government. He remained some months studying the language and making friends with a number of Chinese revolutionists; then his mother, realising he was not getting the education he needed, sent for him to return home.

Before Chiang could be enrolled as a student in Japan, he had to qualify at a Chinese army college. There was a competitive examination for fourteen vacant places, and Chiang was one of more than a thousand entrants. He secured his place, however,



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and, at the end of 1906, was successful in another competitive examination for those to go to the Tokyo Military Academy.

Japanese army training has been always very severe. Years later Chiang said:

Every day I washed with ice-cold water and had at each meal but one bowl of rice together with several slices of salted turnip and salted fish. . . . I learned with concentration of mind, with endurance and patience. As time went on I no longer took the drudgery as suffering but felt most happy as a soldier to be able to stand hunger, cold, hardship and labour.

It is recorded that he encouraged his comrades with the remark "there is nothing unbearable". During the four years that Chiang studied in Japan his devoted mother, "with scraping and saving", paid his tuition fees.

In 1907, Sun Yat-sen was in Japan recruiting for his League of Sworn Brothers, the secret society which grew eventually into the *Kuomintang* (or People's Party). Chiang joined the Sworn Brothers and took part in their discussions. He volunteered for active service, but his fellow revolutionists wished him to continue his studies so that he could undertake bigger tasks later.

Every summer Chiang returned home to see his mother, and on the way he used to spend some days helping the revolutionists who sheltered in the International Settlement at Shanghai.

In the autumn of 1911, when Chiang had resumed his studies after one of these trips to China, he received a telegram telling him of the successful rising on the "Double Tenth". At once he obtained leave of absence and hurried to Shanghai.

Chiang was only twenty-four years old and had seen no active service, but he was given command of a small company of *Dare-to-dies* with instructions to attempt the capture of his native province. His men were ill-equipped, poorly armed and untrained. There was no possibility of a surprise attack because the revolution had been spreading through China for more than three weeks, and the Manchu governor had a well-fortified *yamên*.

Chiang and his little company of *Dare-to-dies* stormed the *yamên* with hand grenades, and, after some brisk fighting, captured the building and the Manchu governor. This important success

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was followed by the capture of other key points. In a very short time the whole province was won.

When the kinsmen and friends of Chiang, who had tried to dissuade him from a military career, heard of his part in the fighting they were astonished and concerned for his safety; but his mother said, "This is a man doing his duty to his country." After the victory had been gained, these same kinsmen and friends showered congratulations on the young hero; but his mother admonished him not to let success go to his head.

When the republic seemed to be established, and Yüan Shih-kai had taken over from Sun Yat-sen the office of Provisional President, Chiang Kai-shek resigned his command and went back to Japan. To a regimental commander who singled him out for praise, he wrote, "The time of destruction is ended and the work of reconstruction is beginning. Well do I know myself that my knowledge and ability are not sufficient for such tasks, and so I have sailed eastwards to continue my studies."

Chiang was still in his early twenties, his youth had been spent learning the art of war, and he had just taken part in a campaign with some little distinction; but, at heart, he was a peacemaker. He wrote a leading article, for an army magazine, advocating a World Government with an International Police Force: "Then there would never be wars and the people would never see horrible calamities." To-day, we are accustomed to the idea of a World Government, though we have not yet created one; but it is surprising to find the suggestion made by a young Chinese military student, in an army magazine, published in Japan, as long ago as 1912.

Chiang advocated a World Government "comprising people of the yellow, white, red and black races", but he realised it could be brought about only by free peoples. China must recover control of her country from the Powers who had seized strategic points or established economic controls. To do this China needed a well-trained and disciplined army.

At that time Germany was reputed to have the most efficient army in the world, and Chiang planned to visit Berlin to study German methods. But it became evident that Yüan Shih-kai was betraying the new republic and seeking to make himself emperor. Chiang left Japan and, with Sun Yat-sen and other Sworn

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Brothers, began an anti-Yüan movement from Shanghai. As the proverb says, *A barren year discovers filial sons; a disordered state shows loyal officers.*

In the fighting that followed, Chiang was captured, and, doubtless, would have been executed had he not contrived to escape.

By the late autumn of 1913, Chiang was back in Japan; this time not as a student, but as an exile in the company of Sun Yat-sen, Charles Soong and other Sworn Brothers. He asked his mother for money and, although the kinsmen and friends warned her that it was dangerous to help a "rebel", she said, "Is there such a mother in the world who would blankly ignore the urgent need of a son in danger?" She did not fail to send help all the time Chiang was in exile.

The next two years were full of excitement. Chiang and other young revolutionists, and even Sun Yat-sen, who was growing old for such work, slipped in and out of China reorganising the old secret societies, and planning new insurrections. "If Yüan catches you," said Chiang to his closest friend, "I shall live to carry out your work." Not long afterwards the friend was betrayed and killed.

Yüan died in 1916, leaving China in great confusion. Rival governments were set up in the north and in the south, and in many provinces of the vast country local governors became "War Lords", ruling without reference to any higher authority.

The young men who followed Sun Yat-sen had profound respect for their leader. To them he was "the Master". Chiang wrote to another member of the party, "I think the best thing about the Master's friendship is his straightforwardness. People respect his dignity and are grateful for his kindness." Elsewhere he wrote of the rarity of "a man like the Master, who treats people with sincerity". But Chiang Kai-shek did not agree always with Sun Yat-sen. He felt that Sun expected too much from the friendliness of the Western Democracies, and was too trustful of some members of the party whose loyalty Chiang doubted. Subsequent events proved Chiang to be right.

Chiang was not altogether easy to work with. Sun wrote to him:

When I look among the members of our party, I find very few who are experts in war and also loyal. Only you, my

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Elder Brother, are with us, you whose courage and sincerity are equal to those of Chu Ta-fu, and your knowledge of war is even better than his. But you have a very fiery temper, and your hatred of mediocrity is too excessive. And so it often leads to quarrelling and difficulty in co-operation.

Another friend rebuked Chiang in these words:

You, my Elder Brother, are extremely self-willed to an almost incorrigible extent. Whenever you are disappointed at some trifle, you let your anger go unchecked. In dealing with people in that way you run the grave danger of courting calamity; or at least you will find it most damaging to your career.

It is not to be supposed the blame was all on one side, for sometimes Sun Yat-sen was exasperated almost to the point of ill-temper, and we find Chiang replying to his other friend:

You seemed very stern both in voice and colour. I could not get a word in edgeways and so felt it unbearable. . . . But I have a bad temper and am usually lacking in good manners. When I think that I am over-patient with you, my Elder Brother, after having had enough of your anger, I become unconsciously rude, bursting out all at once.

Chiang knew his weakness and worked patiently to overcome it. He wrote:

The trouble with me in society is that I go to extremes. I have lifelong sworn fast friends but no ordinary boon companions or social acquaintances . . . advice from my friends is as welcome to me as refreshing songs sung by birds . . . I am sure you, my Elder Brother, will not be offended by my bad manners . . . I hope you will never be tired of giving me advice and become as formidable to me as the Master . . . when I may be able to change my nature a little and enter the way of righteousness.

Chiang's self-criticism is not the introspection of a very young man, for at this time he was thirty-four. His words echo the observation of the schoolmaster who noted "periods of quietude and outburst", and they show a generous recognition of faults

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and a humble desire to amend. Mencius said, "He who gets to the bottom of his mind comes to know his nature; knowing his own nature, he also knows God."

Chiang was much affected by the death of his mother. He wrote, "She swallowed no end of bitterness and never refused any kind of toil, all for her unfilial son . . . the grey sky has existed for an eternity, but how can it be as long as my sorrows." Sun Yat-sen sent a funeral oration in which he referred to the strict training she had given her son, "You kept him from wasting his energies in useless exertions, so that when he encounters extreme danger and faces great risks where success and failure are touch and go, his presence of mind never forsakes him and is equal to any situation."

These words of "the Master" were soon tested again, for a traitor attacked Sun in Canton and he was obliged to take refuge in a gunboat on the river. Chiang hurried to the rescue. The gunboat, with Sun and Chiang on board, ran the gauntlet of fire from the guns of a land fort and received six direct hits. For nearly two months the small vessel was bottled up in the river. Chiang took his turn at cleaning the cabin and swabbing the decks and sometimes, under cover of night, went ashore seeking food in country occupied by the enemy. At last, they were rescued by a British warship.

After this adventure, Sun, as President of the Southern Government, sent Chiang to Moscow to study Red Army methods. The Soviet Union had been established five years, in a hostile world. Chiang was impressed by the progress made in educating the illiterate masses, and by the political teaching that went with military training in the army.

It was clear to him, and to Sun, that the Russian brand of communism could not be applied successfully to such individualists as the Chinese, but they welcomed Russian help in re-organising the *Kuomintang*, and in training a corps of efficient army officers imbued with Sun's *Three Principles of the People*.

After the death of Sun Yat-sen, in 1925, control of the political side of the *Kuomintang* passed largely to the communists. The now famous Mao Tsi-tung and Chou En-lai held posts in the administration.

Chiang, who remained military leader, did not altogether like

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the way the Russians stirred up anti-foreign sentiment in China, and, after a time, he felt sure they were doing so more for their own benefit than for love of China. So he took sudden action against communists in the army and isolated the Russians, almost without bloodshed. Then he reported to the Political Council of the party saying, "If I have exceeded my authority I am prepared to submit to punishment." No one dared dispute the issue. The Russians were given a complimentary banquet and sent home.

Chiang Kai-shek was now the foremost figure in the political life of China. Some communists, who plotted against the *Kuomintang*, began a terrorist policy of assassination which Chiang suppressed with energy and severity. He cleared the country of "War Lords" almost to the borders of Manchuria and was checked only when a defeated "War Lord" called on the Japanese to bar his path. This was a bitter blow, for Chiang's aim was to unite China under one government, and he had almost succeeded. He blamed the left-wing members of his party for failing to support him at a critical time. Then he resigned, retiring to his old home in the country.

Madame Sun Yat-sen is one of the three famous daughters of Charles Soong. At her house, Chiang met her younger sister, Mayling. He wanted to marry Mayling and for five years kept in touch with her, mainly by letter. At last she agreed to marry if he could obtain her mother's consent.

Mrs. Soong, the daughter of a Chinese Christian Minister, at first disapproved of Chiang. She pointed out that Mayling had been brought up in a Christian home and that her outlook was that of a Christian. Like most Chinese, Chiang was steeped in the teaching of Confucius, and, from his mother, had a considerable knowledge of the Buddhist faith as practised in China.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ revealed the nature of God in the most complete way vouchsafed to man; but this does not in any way conflict with a belief in the inspired wisdom of the Chinese sages. Those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus do not find themselves out of step with Confucius; though, in minor points, they may question some of the interpretations of orthodox Confucianists.

Chiang told Mrs. Soong he was quite willing to read the Bible

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and examine the Christian faith, and with this promise she gave her consent. Some Chinese still look upon Christianity as the religion of aggressive "barbarians", but Chiang Kai-shek is not a man to promise lightly. During the next three years he gave much time to a thorough study of the Bible; he had before him the example of his wife's faith; and he discovered that some of the most reliable men who shared his struggle to unite China were Christians. Three years after his marriage he was baptised. According to a Chinese biographer, the influence of Christianity on Chiang's character has been notable ever since this time.

It was not long before the *Kuomintang* recalled Chiang to take charge of the army. Almost at once, communists and Russians seized Canton and were ejected only after fighting which left bitter memories on both sides. Chiang closed the Russian consulates and broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow. In an address to army officers he said:

If foreigners are friendly towards us and show a disposition to support us, then we must unite with them, but we must do all we can to overthrow their imperialist governments . . . we must not be overbearing ourselves, nor must we look down upon others, or ill-treat foreigners. We want real independence.

For a time there seemed a prospect of unity. Peking, which means "northern Capital", was renamed Peiping, or "northern peace". But still there was dissension within the party, "incidents" with foreign powers and, especially, high-handed interference by the Japanese.

In 1931, the Japanese seized Manchuria. China appealed to the League of Nations. For the first time, a dispute between two big nations was investigated impartially by a league of sovereign states; and, what is important, the aggressor was convicted and judgment passed. Unfortunately there was no sentence, for America was not a member of the League and, in Europe, too few realised that this was the beginning of another world war.

Chiang Kai-shek was criticised, particularly by Chinese communists, for failing to resist the Japanese. He believed that some day there would be war with Japan, but that China was too weak to face such a conflict then. He wanted first to unite China, and he thought this could be done only by suppressing

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communism and then building up a modern army.

Every year Japanese arrogance increased. Chiang had to swallow insults, return soft answers to insolent demands, and even suppress the anti-Japanese activities of patriots. The "very fiery temper", of which Sun complained ten years earlier, was controlled with difficulty.

The struggle with the communists was a sad drain on Chinese life and resources, but in 1935 the Chinese Red Army made a spectacular retreat from South China to the barren north-west, and there set up a government on communist lines.

Meanwhile Chiang held together the *Kuomintang*. Because the Chinese are a great people and likeable, it is easy to overlook the grim side of modern Chinese life—poverty, illiteracy, superstition, corrupt officials, bribery in high places and all the sorrows that arise from civil wars and foreign aggression. Also, it requires imagination to realise the difficulties of reorganising such a vast country as China—with four hundred and fifty million people living, mainly, in small villages; scattered over an area equivalent, roughly, to Europe; but with few railways and hardly any modern roads.

Chiang Kai-shek saw the evils and understood the difficulties. He began the New Life Movement. This was a call to the Chinese to practise under modern conditions the kind of virtues approved by Confucius and Mencius, and, of course, by Christians—honesty, plain-living, manliness, cleanliness and unselfishness. A proverb says, *If you plan for one year, sow grain; if for ten years, plant trees; if for a hundred years, grow men.* The New Life Movement seeks to grow men and women of character.

Long ago Chiang realised the importance of air travel for a country like China. In 1910, less than a year after the first flight over the English Channel, he wrote a book on the use of aircraft for military purposes. When the New Life Movement began, the Chiangs travelled by plane to many remote parts of China. Their purpose was to expound the Movement, but so much air travel brought Chiang a new knowledge of his country and a much wider understanding of his people.

In 1936, fighting broke out between *Kuomintang* troops and communists near Sian. The *Kuomintang* forces, commanded by a certain Marshal Chang, were defeated, and Chiang Kai-shek, with



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complete indifference for his own safety, flew to Sian and for three days investigated conditions. Then he went to a near-by mountain resort accompanied by a small bodyguard. Before dawn next day the guard was attacked and overwhelmed. Chiang, climbing a wall to escape, fell and injured his back severely. He found himself the prisoner of his own subordinate officer, Marshal Chang, who presented him with an ultimatum—the *Kuomintang* war against the communists must stop, an all-party government must be formed and the Japanese must be resisted with armed force.

Chiang astonished the Marshal by an outburst of his old "fiery temper", which left the "rebel" speechless. "The course I have decided on is one I believe to be right," Chiang concluded. "If I change it in order to save my life, my usefulness to China is at an end. I should be proved unworthy. Release me or kill me." After which, he retired to bed refusing to eat or discuss the matter further. Very likely he thought of the saying of Mencius, "I am fond of fish, and I am also fond of bear's paws. If I cannot have both, I will give up the fish and take the bear's paws. Similarly, I hold life dear, and also hold righteousness dear. If I cannot have both, I will give up my life and keep my righteousness." His own record says:

From my captors I asked for but one thing, a copy of the Bible, and in my solitude I had ample opportunity for reading and meditation. The greatness and love of Christ burst upon me with a new inspiration, increasing my strength to struggle against evil, to overcome temptation, and to uphold righteousness.

When the Marshal read Chiang's diary, which he had seized, he understood the policy of submitting to Japanese demands while building up strength for the inevitable war. He regretted his hasty action against Chiang Kai-shek, and even the communist leader, Chou En-lai, urged him to release Chiang unconditionally. Chiang's brother-in-law, T. V. Soong, flew to Sian to propose mediation. He was followed by the intrepid Madame Chiang.

All over China the outcome of this incident was awaited with anxiety, and when, on Christmas Day, 1936, Chiang was released and flew back to Nanking accompanied by the "rebel"

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Marshal, there was a remarkable display of popular enthusiasm. Once again it looked as though China had achieved the first of Sun Yat-sen's *Three Principles of the People*—national unity.

On the other side of the Yellow Sea, the Japanese, knowing a united China would be invincible, decided to strike their hardest blow.

On the 17th July, 1937, after the Japanese had opened hostilities, Chiang said, "We hope for peace, but we do not seek an easy path to peace. We prepare for war, but we do not want war . . . once the battle is joined there can be no distinction between north and south, or between old and young." More than two thousand years earlier it was written in the *Tao Tê Ching*, "when armies are raised and issues joined it is he who does not delight in war that wins".

Subsequent events are too close for us to form any judgment, nor can we tell how prominent a place Chiang Kai-shek may find in Chinese history—that longest span in all human records. But we can recall certain moments in our own day which may prove to be significant.

In 1942 on the "Double Tenth", Great Britain and the United States of America relinquished their special rights under what have been called "The Unequal Treaties"—that is, treaties imposed by force instead of by free consent. Chiang said, "To-day marks a new epoch in China's history and to-day England and America have lighted a new light to guide man's progress on the road to equality."

In 1943 on the "Double Tenth", Chiang Kai-shek was installed as President of the Republic of China. After swearing to "comply with the teachings of Sun Yat-sen", Chiang said, "I feel ever more the weight of my responsibilities and I shudder at the thought of the great task which falls upon my shoulders. . . . If I should ever transgress the limit of my power it is the duty of every citizen to censure and correct me."

In 1942, after attending the Cairo Conference with Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek sent a message to his own people, "China should take pride in being great rather than in being powerful—great in heritage and in responsibility, and great in shame if she fails to live up to the teachings of the great sages of the past."

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